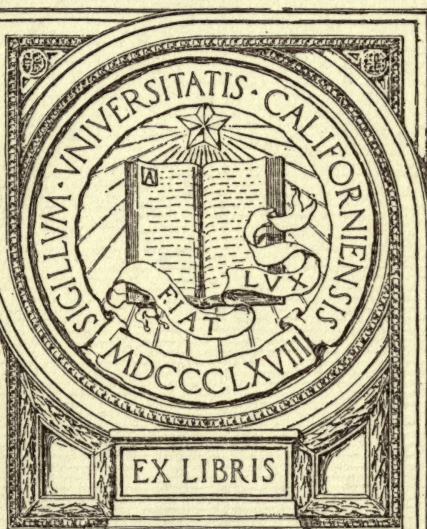


# THE ABYSS

NATHAN KUSSY

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# THE ABYSS



THE ABYSS  
A NOVEL  
BY  
J. H. WATSON

## THE ABYSS

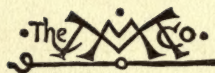
THE ABYSS  
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New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1916

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BY  
NATHAN KUSSY

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Set up and electrotyped. Published February, 1916. Reprinted  
February, 1916.

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Norwood Press:

Berwick & Smith Co., Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.



## CONTENTS

### BOOK I

#### THE DAYS OF MY CHILDHOOD

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. Where I grew up My Father, Mother, and Sister	1
II. I Attend Normal School and Win a Group Award	7
III. We Are Taught to Obey and Are Disciplined	20
IV. I Attend a Normal School and Meet the President and Vice President	24
V. I Attend a Normal School and a Teacher's Conference	27
VI. I Attend a Normal School and am a Member of My District	30
VII. I Leave Home and Go South to the South	32

### BOOK II

#### WITH DEAR AND DEARER

I. Where I Met and met my dear wife and the dear child and became our loving father	37
II. Where I am married in the church and become a member of the church	40
III. Where we live in the home and the dear wife and the dear child	43
IV. Where I have a son and daughter and the dear wife and the dear child	46
V. Where I am a father of a family and the dear wife and the dear child	49
VI. Where I have a son and daughter and the dear wife and the dear child	52
VII. Where I have a son and daughter and the dear wife and the dear child	55





# CONTENTS

## BOOK I

### THE DAYS OF MY CHILDHOOD

CHAPTER	PAGE
I WHEREIN I SEARCH FOR MY FATHER, BECOME LOST, AND MEET A QUEER LITTLE LADY . . . . .	3
II I ATTEND HEBREW SCHOOL AND WITNESS A CIRCUS PARADE	20
III WE ARE VISITED BY CONSTABLES AND ARE DISPOSSESSED .	32
IV WHEREIN I ENTER THE PUBLIC SCHOOL AND MEET THE PRINSTIPAL AND MOSQUITO WEATHER . . . . .	40
V I ACCOMPANY THE LITTLE WOMAN TO A LAWYER'S OFFICE, FORM THE ACQUAINTANCE OF THE OFFICE BOY, AND FIND MY MOTHER ILL . . . . .	51
VI WHEREIN I MEET REISENBERG AND AM BEREFT OF MY MOTHER . . . . .	64
VII WHEREIN I LEAVE HOME AND GO FORTH INTO THE WORLD . . . . .	76

## BOOK II

### WITH BEGGARS AND DERELICTS

I WHEREIN I MEET THE DEAF AND DUMB MAN, AND THE BLIND MAN, AND BECOME THE LATTER'S COMPANION	93
II WHEREIN I AM INTRODUCED TO HOBOLAND, AND CAROUSE WITH A THRONG OF VAGRANTS . . . . .	106
III ABOUT THE LIFE OF THE HOBO, AND HOW RED EYES AND I PARTAKE OF CANDY, AND WHAT FOLLOWS . . .	123
IV WHEREIN BLINKEY SAM DESERTS ME AND LEAVES ME WITH THE DARK MAN . . . . .	132
V WHEREIN I AM TAKEN TO MULBERRY BEND AND BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH THE PARENTS OF DANDY DAN AND WITH THE MONK . . . . .	138
VI WHEREIN I GRATE POTATOES WITH DIRE RESULTS, AND THE OLD WOMAN APPLIES THE WRONG LOTION . .	156

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
VII WHEREIN I PROFIT BY THE INJURY TO MY HAND AND BECOME A BEGGAR . . . . .	165
VIII DESCRIBING WINTER AND SUMMER IN MULBERRY BEND, AND WHAT BEFELL THE MONKEY, AND THE STRANGE DISCOVERY THAT I MAKE . . . . .	171
IX WHEREIN THE MONK LEAVES THE WINNIKINS FOREVER, AND I FLEE TOO . . . . .	181
X I REACH THE BOWERY, ENTER A LODGING HOUSE, AND MEET AN OLD FRIEND . . . . .	184

## BOOK III

### ON THE ROAD

I PICTURES OF THE ROAD: HOW A KING OF THE ROAD PROCURES A MEAL, AND HOW I WITNESS A FATAL ENCOUNTER IN A DIVE . . . . .	193
II A GIRL NAMED CURLS . . . . .	199
III WHEREIN I HOLD DOWN A TRAIN, LISTEN TO THE SONG OF THE RAILS, BRAVE DIVERS PERILS, AND AM ROUGHLY HANDLED . . . . .	213

## BOOK IV

### IN THE TOILS OF THE LAW

I WHEREIN I FIND MYSELF IN THE GRASP OF THE LAW . . . . .	229
II INTRODUCING THE READER TO MY CHARMING FRIENDS, SLIPPERY JOE, RED BILL, AND GREEN TOM . . . . .	242
III HOW I LEARNED TO APPRECIATE THE PRISON FARE, AND HOW A NEWSPAPER AFFECTED THE TANNER . . . . .	249
IV WHEREIN I AM INSTRUCTED IN THE NOBLE ART OF PICKING POCKETS . . . . .	255
V WHAT TRANSPIRED IN MY CELL, AND HOW THE GUARDS ATTACKED NUMBER 587 . . . . .	264
VI THE CLEVER WARDEN, AND HOW HE ADVISES ME TO PLEAD GUILTY TO A CRIME I DID NOT COMMIT . . . . .	274
VII THE CLEVER DISTRICT ATTORNEY, AND HOW HE WRINGS THE TRUTH FROM ME . . . . .	282
VIII CONTINUING MY INTERVIEW WITH THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY . . . . .	299
IX WHEREIN I FIND MYSELF DETAINED AS A WITNESS BUT ESCAPE . . . . .	302



# CONTENTS

## BOOK V

### GROPING FOR LIGHT

CHAPTER	PAGE
I IN A BOWERY MUSIC HALL . . . . .	315
II WHEREIN I WATCH A GAMBLING GAME AND ESCAPE FROM A RAID . . . . .	324
III WHEREIN I DECIDE TO REFORM . . . . .	334
IV THE SONG OF LABOR . . . . .	343
V WHEREIN I SEEK EMPLOYMENT AND FIND NONE, AND AGAIN ENCOUNTER THE MAN IN BROWN . . . . .	348
VI WHICH RELATES HOW I STARVE, HOW I RETURN A LOST HANDBAG AND HOW I AM NOT REWARDED . . . . .	360
VII WHEREIN I DINE IN A RESTAURANT AND SATISFY MY APPETITE . . . . .	366
VIII WHEREIN I GAIN A POSITION AND LOSE IT . . . . .	370
IX "ONCE A CROOK, ALWAYS A CROOK." HOW I SLEEP UPON THE DOCKS. STARVATION OR CRIME . . . . .	383
X WHEREIN ARE DESCRIBED THE PAWNSHOP OF MR. SAM- UELS, THE WONDERFUL JUMPING JACK, AND MY EX- PERIENCE IN SEARCH OF WORK . . . . .	391
XI WHICH RELATES HOW MR. SAMUELS PROCEEDS TO FEED ME AND TO OFFER ME A POSITION . . . . .	405
XII WHEREIN MR. SAMUELS GROWS REMINISCENT . . . . .	414
XIII WHEREIN THE MAN IN BLUE VISITS MR. SAMUELS AND IS REBUFFED . . . . .	420
XIV ABOUT THE PECULIAR CONDUCT OF THE YOUTH NAMED JACK, AND OF HOW A BROOCH DISAPPEARS . . . . .	431
XV CONCERNING THE JUMPING JACK AND LITTLE BLACK EYES AND LITTLE BLUE EYES . . . . .	441
XVI HOW SOME FUNDS DISAPPEAR, AND HOW I LOSE MY EM- PLOYMENT . . . . .	447
XVII WHEREIN I AGAIN ENCOUNTER THE MAN IN BROWN AND FIND MYSELF IN HIS CUSTODY . . . . .	459
XVIII INTRODUCING INSPECTOR BYRNES OF THE POLICE DEPART- MENT . . . . .	473
XIX I AM PHOTOGRAPHED FOR THE ROGUES' GALLERY AND AM INTRODUCED TO THE LINE-UP . . . . .	488
XX WHEREIN I GIVE UP THE STRUGGLE . . . . .	501





**BOOK I**

**THE DAYS OF MY CHILDHOOD**





# THE ABYSS

## CHAPTER I

WHEREIN I SEARCH FOR MY FATHER, BECOME LOST, AND  
MEET A QUEER LITTLE LADY

I think that I was born in the city of Newark, ten miles distant from New York, but as to that I am not certain. There it was that I passed the early years of my childhood, with the din of its shrieking factory whistles in my ears, and the shifting scenes of its restless life before my eyes, and in my nostrils the stench of decaying refuse from the garbage which littered the streets. For in those days the streets wherein my poor mother dwelt remained uncared for and unswept, save at rare intervals when some lone sweeper would stray into view, gaze about him in dismay, then sullenly set about his hopeless task, snorting indignantly as he swept the dirt aside to make way for the dirt and refuse which would be there on the morrow. Then unkempt children would gather from far and near to view the spectacle; the sidewalks would fling derisive sallies at the street, and the street would send back its indignant retorts; the lone sweeper would seem more lonely amid the gibing throng, and his task more hopeless, if that were possible; and finally the night would descend to obliterate all traces of the sweeper's work, and the restless street and the tired sidewalk would settle down to quiet and rest.

In the two rooms which my mother occupied the night was always welcomed with sighs of relief, for she stood all day at the tub, washing, rubbing, wringing, and ironing, and darkness alone brought rest.

Such a dark night! I often thought, as I lay on the straw mattress, and saw the black night staring in at me through the curtainless window.

Such frightful goblins! I shuddered, as I watched the shadows leaping up and down the blackened walls.

The candle sputtered. The tallow ran down upon the table and formed a little white pool. The little flame danced in the draught.

"Good night, my little lambkin," said my mother, as she blew out the light and crept on to the mattress beside me. "Say your prayers and then go to sleep, little dearie."

She had the softest voice! It still makes music in my ears sometimes when I lie asleep and see her spirit tapping gently on the gates of dreamland as though anxious to draw near to me.

"Good night, my little lambkin." I loved to listen to her voice: it was so soothing and so fearless, and it filled me with a sense of safety notwithstanding the curtainless windows and the darkness. It was such a brave voice! I knew that the goblins and the shadows would not dare to remain near me now that my mother lay at my side. So I said my Hebrew night prayers in a firm voice, repeated the *Sh'ma*, proclaiming the unity of God, as is the custom among the Hebrews, and then nestled close to her and felt her kiss upon my lips as I fell asleep.

It was ever thus at night. In after years I often thought of that soft good night. In the years of sin and crime and shame which were to come I often thought of it with a sharp pang and a sudden catching of the breath.

She worked very hard, and knew no rest save on the Sabbath. From Friday evening until Saturday evening we dwelt in Paradise, for on the Sabbath day we belonged to each other. Then I would sit at her side while she read to me in Yiddish some wonderful tales from the book of Bible stories which she loved to read; or we would go hand in hand to the little synagogue where the men stood with their praying shawls wrapped about them, and their Hebrew prayer books in their hands; and at dinner we would have meat — real meat, not bread soaked in soup, for the Sabbath is a day of rejoicing, and a feast day — and we would eat the meat, and drink the soup in which it had been boiled, and would rejoice in our riches as we said grace with thankful hearts.

I never knew my father. He died when I was six months old, leaving a hungry wife, and a little child, and an empty purse. My mother often spoke of him — softly and tenderly as was her wont — especially on the Sabbath eve when the candles had been lighted, and the white linen which she had preserved since her marriage had been spread upon the table, and we had sung *Lecho Dodi*, welcoming the Sabbath as a bride.

One of the earliest recollections of my youth is connected with a certain Sabbath evening: and the picture of the lighted candles upon the table, and of my mother's tearful eyes as she lays her hands upon my head and gives me the Sabbath blessing, is so vivid that, as I think of it, I seem a child again, wondering what these tears mean.

“W’y do you kye, mamma dear?”

“I think of your papa, little lambkin, and of how he loved to sing *Lecho Dodi* on the Sabbath eve. And what a voice he had! When he sang the angels listened.”

I try to conceive of a voice which fills the universe, and



whose reverberations reach the angels in heaven. I wonder what effect such a voice would have upon Mrs. Greenbaum who lives on the floor below, and who is quite deaf, and who walks about all day with cotton in her ears and with a towel tied around them.

"Is papa dead?" I query, after ruminating over what my mother has said.

"Yes. Yes." She sways her body to and fro, and her tears flow fast. I cannot comprehend her anguish. I stand at her knee, and gaze at her wonderingly.

"Wot does dead mean?"

"He is gone to God."

I ponder over her words. Gone to God? Why did he go to God? Why did he not rather remain with my dear mamma? Did he not know that she would weep if he went to God?

"W'y did he go?" I ask the question resentfully, feeling it was cruel of him to leave her and to cause her pain. She folds me to her and rocks me in her arms.

"God took him," she answers brokenly.

"W'y?"

"He was sick, and God took him to heaven." I ponder over her words.

"Is he all wight now?"

"Yes, dearie."

"Den w'y don't he come back?"

She closes her eyes before replying, as though in pain.

"He is so happy where he is —"

"W'y is he happy? Don't he know that you is kyin' for 'im?"

"He is so far away, and he is in heaven with the dear God —"

"W'y don't God give him a big ladder so dat he kin climb down?"

She murmurs Hush! Hush! and rises hastily, and tells me that supper is ready, and lifts me to my chair at the table, and soon the delights of *gefuellte* fish and home-made bread smeared with butter drive from my mind all resentment against the father who is too happy in heaven to return to my grief-stricken mamma again.

But in the days that follow I often think of him and of how the angels listened when he sang. I also watch Mrs. Greenbaum closely, waylaying her in the hallways and upon the stairs, and peeping at her through the keyhole of her kitchen door, in the hope of ascertaining what effect my father's voice would produce upon her if she should hear him at a time when her ears were free from towels and unencumbered with cotton. For the cotton has not taken root in her head, as I frequently suspected. My observations at the keyhole have satisfied me that it can be removed at pleasure, and that the towel, likewise, does not adhere permanently to her neck and ears. There are times when, with my eyes glued to the keyhole, I give vent to sundry shrill howls and cries designed to alarm nervous females and to spread terror to timorous hearts. But all my efforts to produce an impression upon the impassive form at work within the kitchen prove unavailing; only her little rat terrier sympathises with my efforts, and barks joyously on the other side of the door as he recognises my insistent voice. It is on such an occasion that the little tailor who dwells in the basement pounces upon me suddenly, lays me across his knees, and proceeds to administer chastisement with a hand of unsuspected weight and power, whereat I give vent to sundry howls and cries more genuine by far than those with which I had assaulted the unresponsive ears of Mrs. Greenbaum. And thereafter, when I approach the fateful door, my lips are silent and my soul is dumb.

But I cannot drive away the sound of that voice to which the angels hearkened. My imagination loves to dwell upon it and to picture the winged messengers of God listening as the music rises from earth. What a wonderful voice, to rise thus to heaven! Is there another like it on earth? No; for I have often heard men and women singing, and their voices could not be heard a block away.

I do not like to see my mother weeping so often. I wish God would give my father a big ladder so that he could climb down and return to us. But what if he should fall? What if the ladder should break? What if —?

A sudden thought overwhelms me.

What if he has sought to return to the mamma who loves him and who weeps for him, and has fallen to the ground, and is lying somewhere with a broken leg, unable to walk?

It is at night that this question rises before me to confront me in the darkness. I turn to my mother, but she is asleep. After a time I fall asleep also, and forget all about the perplexing questions which obtrude themselves whenever I find my dear mother in tears. But in the morning, as I sit upon the front stoop waiting for Esther who lives next door and is the possessor of a rubber ball which I covet — in the morning, as I sit there watching, I begin to picture to myself my father as I saw him last night, and to imagine my mother's joy if he should return to her, even though it be with a broken leg. But how could he return without assistance, and who would lead him back to his home?

I rise suddenly and scamper away. At the corner of the street I pause (for my mother has taught me to be cautious), observe that no vehicle is approaching, and



hasten across. Another street is passed and another. I grow less cautious as I progress. I cross the car tracks on a broad avenue humming with traffic, and do not perceive a horse car approaching with jangling of bells, until the driver draws up the horses with a curse, and some one pulls me back in the nick of time. I am released with the admonition to be careful or I'll have my head taken off; but nevertheless I scurry off heedless of warnings, and at the next corner am almost run down by a milk wagon whose occupant shakes his whip after me as I hurry on.

After a time my energy abates and I begin to observe my surroundings more attentively. I am walking along a squalid street in which the houses jostle each other so that they seem to grow quite rickety and loose-jointed, as if in imminent danger of toppling over in a faint. Each ugly, frowning house-front seems to squeeze itself together and to turn itself half way round in an effort to tread upon its neighbour's foundation. The buildings are low and angular, and sadly in need of paint or of buckets of water. They gaze upon me with unfriendly looks as though protesting against the presence of a stranger in their midst. Their chimneys smoke incessantly, and the dirty window panes on the upper floors blink in the sunlight as though the smoke has entered their eyes and made them weak and watery.

But listen as I may I hear no sound of singing, nor any voice which might tempt the angels to incline their ears: only rough voices, and loud curses, and occasionally the sound of scuffles and hoarse cries.

On every corner groups of boys and men congregate, but the groups are most numerous in front of saloons and liquor stores. There it is that the coarse jests are uttered in the loudest voices, that the laughter is most up-

roarious and the faces of men are most flushed. There, too, young boys smoke their cigarettes and chew their tobacco most contentedly, and quarrels are most frequent, and blows are most often exchanged. A boy of fifteen or sixteen staggers forth from a saloon and lurches against me, and, as I draw back in terror, his companions laugh aloud in amusement.

I no longer hurry on, but proceed slowly, gazing about me fearfully. Everything is strange to me, and I am filled with fear. I have forgotten the object of my search, and only know that I am lost, and that I wish I were at home again with my mother. I begin to cry. I feel very miserable and very hungry. I dig my knuckles in my eyes and rend the air with loud cries for my mamma. A group of curious and unsympathetic children hastily gather about me and mock me unfeelingly. A callow youth inquires whether I want my bottle and whether he should send to the drug store for a nipple. Another callow youth suggests that perhaps mamma has forgotten to nurse her baby pet before sending him forth into the cold world. A damsel with black hair and black eyes feigns admiration of my appearance and cries in ecstasy: "Ain't he got a cute, cunning mug!" And suddenly the group, with singular unanimity, break into a rhythmic chant, the purport of which is that I am a cry baby, cry baby, and not averse to deriving lacteal nourishment from the maternal fount.

I grow indignant amid my misery, and, controlling my tears sufficiently to enable me to single out a member of the group who appears to be but little taller than myself, I strike him in the face. Instantly an air of joyous expectancy pervades the group. A tall boy insists that Bunkey (which is the name of my opponent) refrain from striking back until a ring shall have been formed. Bun-

key protests, and insists upon forthwith hitting me "in the slats," but is overruled and forced back, glowering upon me ferociously, and vowing to wipe the floor with me. A youth who answers to the name of Swipesey volunteers to be my second, and accordingly takes his stand at my side, murmuring in my ear the soothing assurance that I shouldn't be afraid, and that my opponent "can't do no more dan kill me." He also instructs me to be liberal with uppercuts, to close Bunkey's blinkers, and to jump upon his mug.

My fighting blood is hot, and, at a signal, I leap upon my opponent. He does likewise, but he does it first. The daylight suddenly disappears, and constellations of stars rain down upon me from the unseen heavens. They come so fast that the most expert accountant would find it impossible to enumerate them. I suddenly lose all interest in the fight.

When I open my iron-weighted eyelids I find that I am lying upon the ground, and that my fighting blood (or most of it) is trickling from my nose in a steady stream. Also that my clothes are dyed with human gore and that the gore is my own. Also that Swipesey has basely deserted me, and has traitorously joined mine enemy, who is now worshipped as a hero by an exultant and admiring throng. Also that I am crying for my mamma, and that my cries are greeted with shouts of laughter and derision.

Suddenly a little woman scarcely more than three feet high, with the roundest of faces and the shortest of legs, forces her way through the crowd. She reminds me somehow of a little wooden doll; but her dark brown eyes look upon me sympathetically, and the umbrella which she flourishes in her hands assures me of protection.

"Boys! Boys!" she remonstrates, shaking the handle of the umbrella in Bunkey's face.



“Hello, Becky,” murmurs that young hopeful, with a grin of recognition. “Git out o’ de way till I eat ’im alive.”

“Bad boys!” she cries. “You’re bad boys — you — an’ you — an’ you.”

The young villains grin in appreciation of the compliment, and lightly lay hold of her weapon. She is not as tall as the big little boys, and it is in vain that she struggles to release the umbrella from their hands. Finding she cannot wield her weapon she dives down into the depth of a black hand-bag which she carries in her right hand, and draws forth an apple which she offers Bunkey with a comical smile. It is wonderful how quickly her look changes from indignant protest to droll surrender. Her eyes twinkle merrily; her mouth broadens into a smile; she nods knowingly upon the children who now press forward to share the contents of the hand-bag. First one apple, then another, comes to light, only to be wrested from her hand by the greedy fingers which encompass her. There are struggles for the possession of the fruit, and some blows are struck, and one girl scratches the face of her companion. Soon the bag is empty, and then the little woman turns to me, and raises me to my feet, and takes me by the hand.

My nose is still bleeding, and my sobs have not ceased. Swipesey inquires solicitously whether I want to fight any more. I do not. I want to die. Now that I am lost, and am suffering from sundry bruises and contusions, I feel that life holds no more joys for me. I wish I were at home. I wish I had a slice of bread smeared with molasses or butter. Or a cup of milk, or candy.

And what if my mother should fail to recognise me when she sees me? My tears flow fast. The little woman, scarcely taller than I am, draws me forth from the midst

of mine enemies who have succumbed to the wiles of rosy-cheeked apples and are squabbling amongst themselves because of the contention raised by the empty-handed that those who have been denied apples are verily entitled to cores. This contention being disdainfully pooh-poohed by Apples, is violently asserted by Cores, who, driven to desperation by the sight of the fast-disappearing fruit, join forces in an assault upon greed, tyranny, and oppression, with the result that Cores become Apples, and the tyranny of the one supplants the tyranny of the other.

The little woman leads me away from my tormentors.

"Don't cry," she says soothingly. "They're bad boys. Awful boys. Hit one. Don't you care. I don't."

She beams upon me as she says this, and nods her head sagely. The faded flowers upon her faded straw hat nod, too, as though to impress upon me the assurance that they don't care, and that I shouldn't care, either. She seems to be about forty years of age; but there is something doll-like in her appearance, something partaking of the nature of both youth and age in singular combination, as though she had never quite become a woman although she had long since ceased to be a child. And yet there is much about her to remind one of a child. Perhaps it is this that draws me towards her, banishes my fears and dries my tears, so that my sobs soon cease.

"Bad boys," she repeats. "Awful boys. You know why?"

I don't know why, though I suspect it is because they strike so hard and strike first, so I shake my head and sob.

She pauses, and whispers in my ears with intense expression the one word: "Reisenberg."

I don't know what she means, so I say nothing. She seems disappointed at my composure, and at her failure

to impress me with the significance of her utterance, so, after a moment, she queries: "Don't you know him?"

"Who?"

"Reisenberg."

I tell her that I don't know him, whereat she nods her head mysteriously and tells me that he is a bad man, an awful bad man, worse than the boys, and that I should look out or he might take me. I wonder whether he is the bogie man of whom the lady across the street, Mrs. Maxman, has told me various blood-curdling incidents designed to soothe nervous children and to render them more tractable and obedient.

"I'm going to move," says the woman, after a pause. "I don't like my place. I didn't pay my rent this month, and the landlady says I must move. Do you know why?"

I don't, and I tell her so. She smiles upon me and whispers the answer into my ears. It seems that it is Reisenberg. I am not surprised. Whosoever, wheresoever, or whatsoever he, she, or it might be, it is evident that Reisenberg is a word of evil omen, a mysterious word descriptive of some malignant spirit that broods over regions wherein lost boys wander when they stray from home.

We have reached a little one story house, so old and cracked and crooked that I wonder whether the cobwebs which hang all about it serve as a strand to bind it so that it may not fall apart. Into this house we enter through a dark doorway, and find ourselves in a passage from whose walls most of the plaster has fallen away.

"It ain't pretty," says my guide, as she draws a bunch of keys from the depth of her hand-bag, "but if it was darker it would be worse."

I think so, too; but I feel confident that it could not be very, very, very much worse. The little woman asks me whether I am hungry, and when I reply in the affirmative



she says that is very good; but I don't think so, and accordingly break forth into fresh sobs. She says that I shouldn't cry, as she will soon have dinner ready, but I am doubtful of this, for she has so many keys, and experiences such difficulty in finding the one she wants, that I am in despair.

Finally, however, the door is unlocked and we enter a dirty, untidy little room which apparently serves both as kitchen and bedroom, for there is a rusty little oil stove in the centre of the room, and a soiled and torn straw mattress in a corner. A little window with broken panes looks out upon a yard wherein heaps of tin cans and bottles and refuse rise above thirsty weeds and grasses frayed and faded into yellow. A yellow cat is perched outside upon the window sill, and is peering curiously into the room.

There is a sink in a corner of the room, and a little brown cupboard near it, and close to the window stands a table with two stools ranged about it. There is no cloth upon the table, but it arrests my attention nevertheless, not because of any peculiarity about the table itself, but because I am wondering which of the four cockroaches racing across the top of the table will reach the upper edge first. The little woman observes the objects which have attracted me, and smiles.

"I don't like bugs," she says as though she were discussing the palatability of some article of food; "do you?"

I do not answer, for the race is reaching a conclusion, and I am deeply interested.

"Dey is gone," I say, as the last of the contestants disappears over the edge of the table.

"Lor' bless you!" says the little woman, with a reassuring laugh. "You mustn't feel bad about it. Cheer up. They'll come again."

She takes a frying pan from the cupboard, and a loaf of bread, and some cracked dishes. Then she lights the oil stove, and fries two eggs, one of which she places before me, reserving the other one for herself. We seat ourselves upon the stools which are ranged about the table, and she tells me to eat, which I proceed to do with great relish. The cat upon the window-ledge thrusts her head through the window and mews, whereupon the little woman fills a saucer with milk, and feeds her.

"You like eggs?" she asks, beaming upon me. I answer yes, whereupon she nods her head in satisfaction, and tells me that she likes them, too, and that they're good and cheap when they're not too fresh. She has a very jolly, good natured face when she smiles, and at such times her little brown eyes seem to dance in her head; but there are moments when her face looks a little worn and worried, though her smile quickly banishes such looks.

"What is your name?" she asks me.

"Sammy."

"Sammy what?"

"Sammy Gordin."

"Do you live near here?"

"In Prince Street," I murmur faintly: and my eyes fill again as a fresh sense of desolation overpowers me.

"Are you lost?" she asks smilingly. My answer is a sob. She leans across the table, and shakes her little forefinger in my face, and winks at me knowingly.

"Don't you care," she says reassuringly. "Becky'll see you home." Then, to dispel all doubts in my mind, she adds: "I'm Becky."

I finish my meal with heart lightened by this assurance, and then assist the little woman in washing her dishes. This consists in placing them in the sink, and pouring the cold water over them. She does not use a cloth for drying

them, but cleanses them with her hands; and when, with memories of my efforts to assist my mother under similar circumstances, I inquire where she keeps the dish rag, she tells me that it's no use being too particular in cleaning dishes as they get dirty again, anyhow — which strikes me as a very sensible view of the matter, and one which I must present to my mother for consideration.

The dishes being put away (though still very wet), I take the queer little lady's hand, and together we sally forth. Before emerging upon the street it is necessary to lock the door, which proves to be a very tedious proceeding, fraught with much perplexity. Having in mind the time required to find the key which opened the door, I ardently hope that some other key is required to close it; but, to my dismay, it soon becomes apparent that the little woman employs but one key for both purposes. And what a mysterious and elusive key it is! — always hiding behind its neighbours, always thrusting its companions into the foreground whilst hiding its rusty head far in the rear, always furnishing a substitute when it alone is sought, and never at hand though sought far and near. But finally it is found, and inserted in the lock, and turned, and the little lady turns to me triumphantly and says: "They can't fool Becky, can they?" and chuckles, and I chuckle, too, and answer "No, dey can't," and we proceed along the street in high glee.

It seems that Becky is very well known, for all the children accost her. They greet her so warmly, and with such marks of interest, that I am impressed with the conviction that she must be a very noted personage, indeed. They even inquire after Reisenberg — oh, yes, lots of children inquire after him — and all seem intensely interested in his fate. In fact, almost every greeting of "Hello, Becky!" is followed by an inquiry as to how is Reisenberg,



which strikes me as highly solicitous on their part and bespeaking a goodness of heart which is not always characteristic of boys — especially of boys who, when about to be struck by a little fellow, strike likewise and strike first — a detestable breed of boys who fill my soul with aversion.

But, to my dismay, along comes Bunkey, who hails me with a howl of delight, and assures me that my eye is a “beaut,” and asks me whether I want any more, whereat I shake my head emphatically, and edge up closer to my guide, and press her hand tightly. But, wonder of wonders! even he, the base, evil and detestable one, is interested in the fate of Reisenberg and inquires how he is.

The little woman hurries me on, and confides to me that they all know Reisenberg, and that I’d better take care of him; and then she adds, with an air of darkly hinting dread possibilities, that if I should ever again be lost, whether it be my fault or not my fault, of one thing I may always be sure — (here she whispers in my ear the awesome word) — Reisenberg.

After half an hour’s walk we reach Prince Street, and soon I find myself amid familiar surroundings. When we reach the house wherein I live there is a crowd gathered about the door, and a policeman is commanding the people to move on, and my mother is standing at the entrance, crying, and wailing, and wringing her hands, and shrieking that her boy is killed. But I leave the little woman and run to my mother, and when she perceives me she gives a cry, bends down, snatches me to her breast, and covers my face with kisses. And, having showered upon her straying boy a thousand caresses, she does what appears to me to be a very strange and inexplicable thing. She takes me across her knees and spans me — oh, how she spans me! — and assures me that if I ever run away again I’ll be sorry for it. I concede the point. I’m sorry

now. My eyes are sore, and my nose is sore, and my back is sore; but my heart is sorest of all, for my mamma — she who has always deluged me with love and kisses — my mamma has whipped me; and now I know that I have no friend left on earth, and that I shall never, never, never be happy again.

## CHAPTER II

### I ATTEND HEBREW SCHOOL AND WITNESS A CIRCUS PARADE

I am a big boy now, only a head shorter than the little tailor who lives in the basement; and the tailor, mark you, is so old that he must have been almost as old as I am now when I was but a tiny little tot, just born — and that, I am sure, was ages and ages ago.

But it is not alone my height which impresses me with a sense of bigness, nor the new pair of knee breeches which I wear on the Sabbath and which are especially designed for big boys; it is the knowledge that I am big enough to go to school which fills me with pride and arouses the envy of Esther who, perched upon the top of the stoop next door, accuses me of being “stuck up.”

I am not stuck up. I am always willing to share my candy (not the bigger half, of course, but a considerable portion) with Esther or with any other child of my acquaintance. Yes, I am even willing to part with my chewing gum after the flavour has departed from it and my jaws are tired. So it is not excessive pride or a tendency toward aloofness which causes me to pass Esther with a faint grin of recognition. It is the tragic but none the less incontrovertible fact that she is half a year younger than I am, and hence wholly disqualified from association on terms of equality with a big boy who has arrived at the mature age when his mental and physical superiority opens to him the sacred doors of the school.



There are times when I endeavour to be humble, as befits a youth upon whom greatness is thrust perforce. It is in this spirit that I attend Esther's birthday party and partake of her candy and lemonade voraciously and without hauteur. In the same spirit I permit her to lend me her rubber ball and divers toys when mine disappear in the pockets of the bad boy across the street whom I would gladly whip were it not for the fact that he is taller and bigger than I am.

It is on one of the occasions when I am rolling a hoop which Esther has loaned me that Jakey Samuels, who wears a green hat and never washes his face except on the Sabbath, conveys to me the information that, in his opinion, Esther kinder likes me.

I am in doubt for a moment whether to feel indignant or pleased, but compromise on indifference. A moment's reflection convinces me that boys who attend school are quite worthy of any tributes which little girls choose to pay them; and that, if one accept the loan of hoops, rubber balls, and other toys, one should not murmur though some bitter be mingled with the sweet. Esther is a very pretty little girl, with the blackest of black eyes and the reddest of red cheeks, but I do not admire her taste in sweets, which inclines towards caramels and peppermints, whereas I dote upon lemon sticks and lollipops. Under the circumstances it must be obvious to impartial minds that I cannot view her affection otherwise than with supreme indifference.

I am not yet old enough to attend public school, so it is to the Hebrew school that my mother now sends me. The school session begins at half past four in the afternoon so that the older children may first attend the public schools.

We congregate in the vestry rooms of the little wooden

synagogue, and seat ourselves upon the rough, wooden benches, and are initiated into the mysteries of the ancient letters which have been staring at us from the pages of our parents' prayer-books ever since we can remember. *Aleph* and *Beth* and *Gimel* and *Dalet* and all their family of ancient names and ancient pedigree march across the black-board like generals leading their hosts in battle array. We keep our hats upon our heads while studying Hebrew, as did our fathers before us, and as is the custom in the Orient, to betoken respect and reverence. In the public schools we will uncover our heads when studying English; but this is because English, as every one knows, is one of the languages of the *goyim* (Gentiles), and not a sacred language given to Israel by the mouth of God.

But now we are studying the holy tongue — words of which every letter is sacred — and when we come to the word Jehovah we dare not pronounce the ineffable name (for what human lips are pure enough to utter the holy name of God?) so we pronounce the word Lord instead. We know that the letters are sacred, for our teacher tells us that they are written in fire on a background of human blood, and surely letters thus written must be sacred.

But I search in vain through the pages of my prayer-book for the flames and the blood. The letters are all black and the background is all white: so I am sorely perplexed as to my teacher's meaning. I finally conclude that there must be some relation between his words and the deep red scar upon his forehead. For that scar was caused by a fire (so my mother tells me) which destroyed his home in far off Russia. Some wicked people who did not love the one true God said that their own God demanded the death of the Jews, and so they burned all the innocent little Jewish babies, and killed their mammas and their papas, and slaughtered my teacher's little girl, and

flung his little boy into a fire which they had kindled, and left my teacher senseless upon the ground with a big gash from a sword on his forehead. And when I hear this I begin to understand dimly why the words in my prayer-book are written in fire on a background of human blood, and I often think with indignation of that wicked God of the Christians who takes delight in the massacre of the Jews and in the burning of little babies.

My teacher's name is Reb Joseph. He holds a rod in his hand during school hours, and does not hesitate to apply it to the backs and shoulders of unruly boys; but he never uses it on me, for my mother has told me that I must be good to him for the sake of the children whom he has lost, so I try to obey him and be good. But it's hard to be good always; and sometimes I grow very unruly indeed, especially when, in the midst of the history lesson, I find a pin upon the floor which is just long enough to go clean through the new suit which Sammy Jacobson is wearing. Sammy can never remember the name of the town which Joshua is about to attack, and persists in confounding Jericho with cherries. So, when Joshua and Sammy reach the town together, and Reb Joseph, for the sixth time, puts to Sammy the question: "And what was the name of the town, Sammy?" Sammy, for the sixth time, promptly answers "Cherry," to the delight of all the boys, especially of Willie Rosenbaum who, in the guise of a well-meaning friend, has been whispering misleading replies in Sammy's ears.

"Not Cherry," remonstrates Reb Joseph for the sixth time. "Can't you think of anything besides cherries?"

"Peaches," whispers Willie in Sammy's ear.

"Peaches," answers Sammy in triumphant tones.

The rod beats a tattoo about Sammy's shoulders, while his companions laugh in glee.



"Now get up!" commands Reb Joseph.

Sammy slowly rises to his feet, snivelling and whimpering his protest against the chastisement.

"How often must I tell you that the name of the town was Jericho?" storms Reb Joseph. "Have you no ears? Have you no brains? Now pay attention and answer me. What was the name of the town that Joshua wished to attack?"

Sammy hesitates. There is a moment of suspense. The pin which I have found is so bright and shining, and Sammy's new trousers are directly in front of me, and I can't help wondering whether the pin is really as sharp as it seems to be, and whether Sammy's flesh would recoil from the pin's point if the latter were to be inserted deftly yet forcibly.

"Jeric—" murmurs Sammy, with a hopeless and despairing look upon his countenance.

"Jeric—" says the teacher helpfully, as he fixes his eyes upon the miserable youth, and expectantly waits for the final syllable.

It comes.

"Oh!" exclaims Sammy in strident tones, as the pin is driven home.

"Correct — Jericho — correct," says Reb Joseph in tones of satisfaction. "At last you have it, Sammy. Now please don't forget it in a hurry."

He doesn't. It is painful for me to relate what transpires when he encounters me on a vacant lot after school. I will pass that painful incident by, nor dwell upon it.

I love to listen to the Bible stories which Reb Joseph relates — especially to the story of Samson, whom I somehow associate with an eminent pugilist named Sullivan whose prowess in the fistic arena arouses the admiration of the youths with whom I mingle. I am firmly convinced

that Samson was the champion of his day, and do not hesitate to express an abiding conviction of the superiority of the ancient over the modern hero. I picture an encounter between the two in the roped arena, only to awake to a realization of the fact that the heroic Samson has passed away, and that the Golden Age of Heroes is no more.

I am also an ardent admirer of David and of the Goliath episode, and spend much time in practising with a sling, until the fracture of a pane of glass in the room of the little tailor brings down upon me the weight of a hand whose power I had experienced once before; and thereafter the sling and pebble episode in the history of David of old interests me no more.

I am much interested in the story of the prophet whose bald head aroused the ridicule of the irreverent youths of his day, and of how the bears came out of the woods and ate up the bad boys who mocked the hairless head of the holy man. I am acquainted with a rabbi who is a very holy man indeed, a man so devout that I have heard Reb Joseph declare that Elijah himself was not holier than he. And this holy man is bald headed.

One hot summer day I behold him walking along Prince Street, with his hat in his hand. He is very warm, and his bald pate shines in the sun. I am standing at the entrance to the hallway as I espy him, and immediately I think of those bad boys of old, and of the two bears who came out of the woods and ate up the naughty boys who called the good old prophet "Bald head."

I wonder what would happen if I should greet this good old man as the prophet of old was greeted long, long ago. Would the bears come out of the woods? Would they eat me up? I am consumed with a burning desire to test the prophetic attributes of the good man, and to behold those

ferocious animals whose pictures I have frequently seen on circus posters, but whom I have never beheld in bodily form.

The pious one approaches. I grasp the knob of the door and peer cautiously up and down the street in search of lurking animals skulking in doorways or behind barrels. But the only animal which my gaze encounters is Mr. Yatkowsky's tame goat who answers to the name of Nanny and prefers the taste of newspapers and theatrical posters to the flesh of little boys.

The pious one is close at hand. I cast one last fleeting glance up and down the street, assure myself that no bear is in sight, tighten my hold on the door knob, then "Bald-head!" I shout, and close the door with a bang. I scurry up the stairway to our room, open the window, and peer out.

The scene below is unchanged. The goat is deliberately munching a Yiddish paper and is calmly absorbing the news. The pious one is pursuing his way with slow gait. Little Esther is rolling her hoop upon the street, and the baby from across the street is enjoying a mud bath in the gutter. Not a bear is in sight, not a single wild animal. I turn from the window in bitter disappointment. "He ain' no prophet," I murmur gloomily.

But there comes a time when I am permitted to see a circus — not the "stupendous and soul-satisfying scenes of superb splendour within the spreading tent," whereof the poetic press agent writes in alliterative ecstasy, nor yet the "famous, fearless, death-defying feats," upon the circus grounds in Tivoli Park (alas! admission to the magic tent with its wealth of wonders is reserved only for the possessors of untold wealth to whom fifty cents means less than it does to my struggling mother) — nay, within the wonderful tent I may not go, but to behold the parade



upon the public street — ah, that glorious privilege is mine at last!

I stand waiting upon the corner of Springfield Avenue in a fever of excitement. The butcher from whom my mother purchases meat every Friday for the approaching *Shabbos* (Sabbath) stands in front of his shop at the corner; and, when he recognises me, he lifts me to the top of an inverted barrel whence I have an unobstructed view of the street and of the throngs along its sides.

Oh, glorious day, when the circus first pitches its tent of magic upon the golden carpet of a child's mind! Oh day of wonders, and of unmitigated delight and feverish happiness! How fresh and clear is the air to-day — how warm and brilliant the sun — how kind these people are who smile upon the children at their sides — how everybody laughs and is joyous while waiting for the spectacle which is to appear!

Let no cross word be uttered: this is Children's Day, and God smiles down upon the earth, for the earth is young.

Ho there! Make way! Do you not hear the band? The circus is coming!

First the policemen on horseback must clear the way. How proudly they bestride their steeds, and how clean and new their blue uniforms look to-day, and how their brass buttons gleam in the sun! — Back, there! Make way for the police! Back!

Are they gone? Then push forward again to regain the ground they forced us to lose. Forward! Ho, there! Don't push so hard.

You are crushing us. Now then, stand still. Quiet! The circus is here!

What a magnificent wagon is this with its golden figures upon a background of gleaming red! And its wheels —

even its wheels are of gold. And on its top — high up on its top — a band of musicians in brilliant scarlet and gold are blowing mightily into brass instruments which reflect the sun's rays.— Brass? did I say brass? Perish the thought! — gold — only gold — for in the enchanted realms of circusland there is no place for baser metals on this day.

Then follow other wagons of red with strange golden animals adorning their sides, and graceful ponies with long manes, and riders in gorgeous costumes, and pretty ladies in satin dresses of varied hues, and then — and then —

The elephants!

There is commotion in the throng; and the crowd stares in wonder and admiration at the huge monsters as they swing into view. I gaze at them with wondering eyes, my mouth half-open, my body rigid: never did I dream that such gigantic creatures existed on this earth. My fascinated eyes follow them after they have passed by, for they are of the world of giants and ogres, vast habitants of Fairybookland.

Then follow some big camels, and when I ask Mr. Abeles, the butcher, who is standing by my side, what causes them to have such big humps, he informs me that the camels come from a land where there are very big mosquitoes, and that the humps are caused by mosquito bites, and then I feel very glad that I live in a place where the mosquitoes are smaller.

And now come the clowns.

Oh the droll clowns, the funny clowns, the laughing, jesting, merry clowns, with their painted faces, and their merry antics, and their queer clothes! I laugh aloud at sight of them, and so do the other children, and even the grown folks grow merry at sight of their comical faces.

One of them has a queer little cap, no bigger than my thumb, which he takes off to salute the ladies in the politest of fashions, but no sooner is the salute at an end than the cap bounces back of its own accord, and perches on top of his head as before, and all the women and children laugh aloud and clap their hands, and a man standing near me shouts "Bravo!" which I take to be the clown's name, so I shout "Bravo!" also; but Mr. Abeles tells me that I ought to call him Mister Bravo, so I shout "Mr. Bravo" in such a loud voice that some of the people laugh at me.

Mr. Bravo is seated on top of a beautiful gold and red wagon, and there are other clowns seated at his side, and some are almost as funny as he, especially one whose nose is so long that it always seems to be in its owner's way. When this clown takes a pipe from his pocket and attempts to light it he burns his nose. When he wishes to brush a fly from his forehead he slaps his nose. When he endeavours to catch a rubber ball which he flings into the air it bounces upon his nose. It matters not what he does or what he attempts to do, there is always some mishap befalling that unfortunate nose.

But the funniest clown of all is the fat little clown who rides the frisky little pony. He is so fat that he cannot sit straight, but rolls about like a comical human rubber ball. Sometimes he falls over the pony's neck, and then he holds on very tightly lest he fall off. Sometimes he almost slides off the pony's back, and then he bawls "Mamma!" like a little baby, and kicks up his heels in the most ludicrous manner, and flings his arms about the pony's neck, and his teeth chatter, and he rolls his eyes and mumbles a prayer, and everybody laughs at his terror.

And when he reaches a point just opposite the place where I am standing, he suddenly loses all control over



himself, and falls from the pony's back to the ground, where he lies upon his back kicking his heels in the air and bawling "Mamma! Mamma!" until I almost burst my sides with laughter. And when he scrambles to his feet, and climbs upon the pony's back again, all the people clap their hands in applause, and the man near me shouts "Bravo!" from which I conclude that this clown must be a brother of the other clown who bears the same name. And when I confide my deductions to Mr. Abeles he assures me that I am right, and tells me that I am a smart boy, and that he would never have known of the relationship of the two clowns if I had not been sharp enough to guess it; whereat I feel very proud of my sagacity.

Mr. Abeles also enlightens me on a matter which has sorely perplexed me, namely, the method whereby the clowns remove the paint which bedecks their faces. For it appears that they were not born with big, round, red spots on their cheeks. No, not at all: they simply paint their faces in the morning and remove the colors at night. And the method of removal, as elucidated by the obliging Mr. Abeles, is very simple. They place a dish of water upon a stove, put their heads into the dish, and keep them immersed in the water until it boils, when all the paint comes off. It is fortunate (as I remark to Mr. Abeles) that the paint covers their skin: otherwise they might be scalded. He says that's so, he never thought of that: and that I'll be a smart boy if I keep on like that.

Well, the clowns pass by, and then comes the steam calliope, hooting and tooting and shrieking forth music, and making such a fearful din that the music is simply divine. I ask Mr. Abeles whether he wouldn't like to have one of those music wagons in his house, but he says No, his boys play the piano, and that's worse.

He lifts me from the barrel whereon I have been stand-

ing (for the parade is at an end) and presents me with a slice of bologna which I eat as I trot homeward.

I am eager to describe the wondrous spectacle to my mamma; and when I reach home I run up the stairs and forthwith pour into her ears a tale of marvels, seeking to reconstruct the scene so that it may be as clearly impressed upon her mental vision as it is upon mine. She leaves the washtub at which she has been standing, and dries her hands, and listens to me with eager interest.

And when I have told her everything, she brushes the straggling locks back from my forehead, and folds me in her arms, and tells me how happy she is at the thought that her little darling has enjoyed himself so much; and, as she kisses me, I notice that her face is pale and careworn.

## CHAPTER III

WE ARE VISITED BY CONSTABLES AND ARE DISPOSSESSED

A dreary day, dark and cloudy.

A bleak earth staring up at a bleak sky, and dark rain-clouds scudding across the face of the heavens.

The sun is hiding as though afraid to venture forth lest the coming rain extinguish his light. The earth, unlighted, frowns in the semi-gloom, and waits in dumb terror for the deluge and the whistling winds.

There is rain in the air; and men, walking the gloomy streets, hold their umbrellas in their hands as they scan the cloudy heavens, and await its approach.

The heavens are gray — a dull, cheerless, sombre gray — and the dark blotches upon them, which are but scudding clouds, grow and spread and broaden until they resemble irruptions upon the face of a sick and moaning sky.

The sky is moaning. I can hear the sound of its sighs and wails sweeping down to the earth upon the wings of the wind. I can see its pallid face staring into the curtainless window of our room. I can feel the chill of its cold presence and can see its shiver whenever the wind rattles the window panes and shakes the broken shutter which cannot close.

I wonder where the sun has hidden himself. He has fled with his light, and has left the earth cold and bleak. A shadow has fallen upon the housetops, and the roofs look old and dark. It has fallen upon the dirty streets, and the newspapers which litter them vainly fly about in an effort at escape, only to fall back again looking darker and



dirtier than ever. It falls upon men and women, and they grow swarthy and gloomy as it descends.

The shadow enters the window of our room and spreads itself over our belongings. It enters my mother's heart, and she sinks down upon a chair and weeps. It enters my heart, too, as I observe my mother's tears, but I say nothing. I only gaze out of the window listlessly, and feel very sad and heavy-hearted, for it pains me to see my mother in tears, and she will not tell me the cause of her sorrow.

She is not washing to-day. She has not done much washing or ironing for several months. From scraps of conversation overheard here and there I learn that many are out of employment, and that times are bad. I do not understand what is meant by times, but conclude that they must be very bad and wicked indeed if they are the cause of my mother's depression of spirits.

I eat as much as ever, but the quantity of food purchased for household consumption diminishes day by day; and although my mother never stints me in my meals, she eats very sparingly herself. But this, as she frequently impresses upon me, is because she is not hungry.

I am gazing out of the window, and am feeling perplexed and heavy hearted, when the sound of a loud knock upon the door of our room causes me to turn hastily. I catch sight of my mother's face; and the terror and agony stamped upon it fill me with sharp dread and haunt me for many days. She does not bid the visitor enter, nor does she make any effort to rise, but sits there as though turned to stone, with her eyes of terror fixed upon the door.

The knock is repeated, and, there being no word from within the room, the knob is turned and a man enters. He holds in his hand a paper which he reads to her, and then he tells her that he is from the District Court, and that

the paper directs him to dispossess her for non-payment of rent, and that he's sorry but it can't be helped, an' he hopes she won't make no fuss about it.

She stares at him blankly for a moment, and then she utters a cry of anguish, and points to me, and wails: "My boy! My boy! What will become of my boy?" and wrings her hands, and sobs. And when I witness her anguish, and hear her cry, I feel vaguely that some calamity has overtaken her, and I, too, begin to sob, and to cry aloud.

And soon some of the neighbours troop up the stairs, and expostulate with the constable, and pray him to be merciful, and not to throw a widder an' a half orphing into the streets. But he exhibits his writ of execution, and says that he is sorry, but he's an ofricer of the court an' mus' do his duty, whereat some of the neighbours are duly impressed until Mrs. Maxman announces in triumphant tones that she do believe that seal on the paper is a forgery for it ain't no more'n half as big as the seal w'en she was dispossessed, an' she's been many a time an oft, an' she ought to know, so there!

It might have gone hard with the constable had he not been reinforced, at this moment, by his assistant, a big, red faced man with a fierce moustache and a husky voice, who swears in a loud voice, and spits upon the floor as he enters, and glares fiercely about him.

"What the hell!" shouts the big man ferociously.

The neighbours, awed by the husky voice, abandon their English and express their sentiments in voluble Yiddish, enlightening to the initiated alone. They heartily unite in wishing the big man a black year, express an earnest hope that his soul will not partake of celestial bliss, and in divers ways express a callous indifference to his future welfare in the world to come. Then, having exhausted

their benedictions, they draw from their stockings and their pockets their lean purses, and offer the constable the amount of rent in arrears.

Can't accept it.

Why not?

Too late. She should have offered it before the trial.

Consternation. More benedictions.

Mrs. Maxman, as an authority on ejectment proceedings, insists that he (to wit, the constable) ain't proceedin' reg'lar.

The seal is green w'en it should be red: besides, it ain't no more'n half big enough to be reg'lar, and it's damages if the constable touches the stuff.

He not only touches it, but, with the assistance of the big, husky-voiced man, carries it down the stairs and deposits it upon the sidewalk.

Some one suggests that the landlord be appealed to; but the landlord is out of town to-day, and cannot be reached; and soon the torn mattress, and the worn chairs and table, and the broken stove, and all the household effects which possess so little value save in my mother's eyes, are lying heaped upon the sidewalk, and my mother and I are sitting upon the mattress, weeping bitterly, and surrounded by curious pedestrians who stop to stare at us, and sympathetic friends rich in counsel.

Mrs. Maxman suggests Law and Damages. First, because the seal is green: second, because it ain't more'n half.

Appreciating her importance as an authority, she explains her position to the big, vulgar man with the husky voice.

"O hell!" says the big, vulgar man in his husky voice. Nothing more.

Somewhat nonplussed by this reception of her views as an authority she lays them at some length before the



constable, who is less vulgar, and whose voice is less husky.

The constable smiles. Nothing more.

O purblind creatures of iniquitous Law! "I knowed they got no sense," says Mrs. Maxman, concealing her wounded feelings beneath a scornful exterior.

Send for a lawyer! It is Mrs. Maxman who suggests this, with an eye to Damages. A messenger is forthwith despatched in search of a lawyer to repair the ravages of Law.

Enter the majesty of the law in the person of a little, faded, insignificant looking being with weak eyes which constantly blink, and weak legs which appear to be infirm with youth. His voice is weak and apologetic, and he demands a retainer forthwith.

Intense indignation, sarcasm, disparaging shrugs. A retainer? Perish the thought! — Avaunt, iniquitous hireling! Send for another lawyer!

He comes, bald headed and smiling — he comes; and Authority, represented by Mrs. Maxman, forthwith furnishes him with the necessary facts, and awaits triumphant vindication.

It is not forthcoming. Rather does he pooh-pooh the suggestion that a green seal is less binding than a red one; nor does he view with much favour the contention that the validity of the proceedings is affected by the size of the seal.

Authority, in the person of Mrs. Maxman, thus reversed by Law, in the person of its bald-headed votary, refuses to admit defeat. It is evident that the lawyer is in the employ of the absent landlord; that the wretch has doubtless been bribed by said absent landlord to deliver an opinion so wholly at variance with that of Authority as exemplified by the estimable Mrs. Maxman. Thus is justice denied the down-trodden in this land of liberty!

Ha! Do our ears deceive us, or does the wretch actually demand a fee?

Five dollars?

Five dollars for what? What advice? Of what benefit was your advice? What damages could be recovered on such advice? Keep your advice. We want no advice. We want Damages.

Thus Mrs. Maxman. She scornful, he indignant. Law expostulates, Authority sneers. Law threatens, Authority derides. Law retires in high dudgeon, unremunerated, unappreciated: Authority holds forth on the audacity of wretches suspected of accepting emolument from landlords. Exit Law, leaving Mrs. Maxman triumphant.

Meanwhile it is beginning to rain. The kind-hearted people about us beg mother to accept the hospitality of their homes, but she refuses to leave the few articles of furniture which constitute all her earthly possessions lest they be stolen in her absence. She urges me, however, to go indoors, but I refuse to leave her side; and soon we are left alone amid the wreckage of our home, while the pitiless rain descends, and drenches us to the skin.

"God of Israel, save us!" cries a familiar voice; and, at the sound, I turn, and recognise Reb Joseph, who has halted to gaze at us in pity and amazement. It is not necessary to explain to him our plight, for he is familiar with such scenes. His old and faded frock coat, which was black ten years ago but is now green, is buttoned tightly about him. He has no umbrella; and the rain is dripping from the brim of his hat and is glistening upon his black beard.

"In such a rain?" he cries, raising his moist hands in astonishment. "Mrs. Gordin, are you crazy? Would you kill yourself and your boy?"

My mother wails that she is lost, that she would be

happy if the grave covered her, that she has no longer a home or a roof to shelter her, and that accursed be the day when she left Poland to come to this cruel land. But Reb Joseph takes her by the arm, and takes hold of my hand, which is wet and cold, and forces her into the room of the little tailor, and there we seat ourselves at the window, and watch the rain descending upon our household furniture, and ruining what was already old and worn.

We hear the rain drops dripping upon the bureau and upon the inverted chairs; we see them descending upon the soaked mattress and upon the cloths and linens; and we hear the sound of the drops — drip, drip, drip,— as they strike the iron kettles or fill the hollow dishes.

It is evident that the little tailor who has frequently chastised me with right good will harbours no ill feeling towards me, for he pats my cheek, and tells me that I am a good boy, and assures my mother that I will be a blessing to her when I grow up to manhood, and hands me a slice of cake which I munch contentedly after removing a fly which has been baked therein and which I at first mistake for a currant.

Reb Joseph leaves us, but returns an hour later to inform us that the neighbours have contributed a few dollars for furniture and rent, and thereupon hands my mother fifteen dollars wrapped up in brown paper. She weeps, and says that she has never before accepted charity; but Reb Joseph quotes the Talmud to convince her that, in accepting this money she does that which is pleasing in the sight of heaven, for she thereby enables those who have contributed their mite to succor the distressed in accordance with the commandment of the Eternal God. Then, having persuaded her to accept the money, he shakes our hands, smiles happily, and takes his departure.

The rain beats upon the window panes; the wind shakes



the frames and rattles the doors ; the drops fall with a drip, drip, drip, into the empty cups and upon the iron kettles ; and the black and starless night descends, and shuts out from my mother's gaze the rain-soaked mattress and the dripping chairs.

## CHAPTER IV

### WHEREIN I ENTER THE PUBLIC SCHOOL AND MEET THE PRINSTIPAL AND MOSQUITO WEATHER

It is on the following morning that my mother discovers some vacant rooms in Lock Street and forthwith moves into them. The man who carts our wet furniture to its destination possesses a creaking wagon and a wheezy horse which he places at our disposal for the sum of two dollars. My mother rides on the seat at his side; but I climb into the wagon, and seat myself on top of the load of furniture, and enjoy the treat of a ride upon an insecure and perilous elevation, through squalid streets wherein unkempt children roll and tumble; through cleaner streets whose houses are shaded, here and there, by towering trees; across car-tracks which jolt the wagon, and shake the furniture, and rattle the dishes; past stores, and factories, and dwellings; over cobble stone pavements which bump me up and down until my flesh seems to become loosened from my bones; through unpaved streets, wet with the rain of the previous night, into whose mud the wheels sink softly; and finally across an iron bridge which spans a winding canal, and along a dirty street which follows the course of the water a short distance and then parts company, leaving the canal to pursue its own devious course.

My heart thumps at sight of the water. Is it possible that we are to live close to its banks? Visions of improvised boats, of bits of wood sent adrift upon its surface, float through my brain. Dreams of hot days spent upon

its banks, doing nothing but dangling one's feet in its cool depths, come to me and fill me with delight.

The wagon stops — it stops before a house directly opposite the bank of the canal. I clamber down with a shout of delight. My hopes are realised. Ho for the delights of a stream of water, and for the joys of the canal!

We live on the second floor of a two-and-a-half-story frame building which stands on the corner of a street. On the first floor is a saloon with some wooden steps leading up to the entrance, and to the side of the saloon is a door opening into a hallway, whence a flight of stairs leads to the rooms above. We occupy a fair-sized kitchen whose low ceiling seems to cherish ambitions of bumping me upon the head as soon as I shall grow big enough, and two bedrooms, one of which is for our own use, and one for the use of a subtenant, provided we find one.

We *do* find one, for, on the following morning, as I sit upon the front stoop, whittling a stick with a broken pocket knife which I have acquired through barter (to wit: in exchange for three marbles, six buttons, a pencil, a roll of twine, five pieces of coloured glass, three worms, and a caterpillar imprisoned in a bottle) — as I sit thus upon the stoop, who should come along but the queer little woman who rescued me from Bunkey and his allies, as related in the first chapter of this narrative.

"Hello!" she says, recognising me instantly, and halting to greet me; "you live here?"

I answer in the affirmative. Her face lights up, and she smiles.

"You moved from Prince Street?"

"Yes; we moved yesterday."

She nods her head knowingly, and her little eyes twinkle.

"Always moving — just like me."

I feel tempted to assure her that we are not always mov-



ing, and that we had lived in Prince Street ever since I was born; but she appears to derive such satisfaction from her mistaken conclusion, and the smile upon her little round face is so joyous, that I refrain from marring her pleasure by undeceiving her, so I remain silent.

"I move all the time," she says. "I moved last month, too. The woman didn't like it 'cause I didn't pay rent, so I got angry and moved away. I won't stand no freshness," she continues beaming upon me, "and when the woman got so fresh I told her I was going to move. I bet she was sorry. She said she was glad; but she was only foolin' when she said that." Here she winks at me knowingly, and lowers her voice to a confidential whisper. "She was awful sorry; but she didn't want to show it, that was all. You don't get such tenants like me every day."

She says this last with such an air of assurance that any doubts which I may have had as to the landlady's regret and penitence are immediately swept away, and I find myself picturing the expression of poignant remorse with which the lady must have viewed the departure of so excellent a tenant.

"Do you know why the woman is so fresh to me?" queries Becky, and when I shake my head she informs me that the reason is Reisenberg.

In the interval which had elapsed since my previous conversation with the little woman, the mysterious Reisenberg had sunk into the background of my consciousness, and I had almost forgotten his existence; but now he suddenly leaps to the front again, shrouded in mystery, malignant and powerful.

"Look out for him," she says, shaking her little forefinger warningly. "He's a bad man — Oh, he's an awful man — he could almost eat you up."

I picture to myself some ferocious ogre devouring me

with great gusto, and I cannot refrain from casting a startled glance up and down the street to assure myself he is not stealthily approaching.

"I don't like the place where I'm living," resumes Becky: "it's so full of bugs. I don't know why it is, but as soon as I live a little while in a place my room gets full of bugs. I think it's because the family down stairs ain't clean. I hate to live with people that ain't clean. Don't you?"

"We got a room upstairs," I remark casually, not, however, without some hope of procuring a subtenant for my mother. "You kin have et if ye want et." Then, lest my offer be construed as an invitation to abide with us unconditionally I hasten to add: "Ye gotta pay rent, dough."

"How much?"

I have heard my mother remark to the man who moved us that she had rented the rooms for ten dollars, and that if she could get some one to take one of the bedrooms for three dollars she would feel considerably relieved. So I inform the little woman that she could have the room for three dollars, whereat she is delighted, and assures me that that's just the sort of place she's looking for.

I run up the stairs, feeling very big and proud, burst into the kitchen where my mother is engaged in cooking dinner, and excitedly announce that I have let the vacant bedroom. My mother drops her cooking, and invites Becky upstairs, and arrangements are then and there concluded whereby the little woman is to pay three dollars per month for her room, and three dollars per week for her meals, and is to store her stove and kitchen utensils upstairs in the attic. And when the little woman is gone, mother embraces me, and calls me her smart little man, and I feel very proud and happy.

So the little woman appears next day, perched on top of a little load of furniture which is piled up on a rickety wagon that wends its way leisurely along Lock Street. High upon the shaking pile she sits in blissful contentment, dangling her little legs over the top of a kitchen table, and clutching the edge of a chair with one hand while in the other she holds a little green parasol which is raised above her head to protect her from the sun, though it is autumn, and the day is quite cool. She comes in state, like a little toy queen, on a big high throne, and behind her come her courtiers trailing along the dusty road. There they come, a full dozen of them — mischievous boys, laughing boys, dirty, dusty, ragged boys — all following the wagon and acclaiming the little queen, and all shouting, with one accord, in token of homage: “How is Reisenberg? How is Reisenberg?”

So the fame of Reisenberg has even penetrated Lock Street! Mysterious Reisenberg! Famous Reisenberg! Wonderful being to inspire such interest in so many minds!

Who — O momentous question! — who, *who* is Reisenberg? My heart quakes at the mystery of it all.

But the heart of the little woman is not quaking. On the contrary, she is evidently pleased at this tribute to the mysterious being who is the bane of her existence. She nods; she smiles; she beams upon her youthful followers; she shakes her little parasol at them playfully: she even draws forth from some hidden depths amid the pile of furniture her black handbag, which she holds aloft triumphantly, to the delight of her youthful acquaintances.

“How is Reisenberg?” The interest evinced in this gentleman’s welfare is redoubled at sight of the handbag.

She dives down into its depths and draws out an apple, which she throws at the foremost urchin. There is a shout, and a scramble, and half of the youths are strug-



gling in the dust for the possession of the coveted fruit. I wish that I were with them.

Another apple, and another scramble. My mouth waters.

A third apple.

They are not small apples. They are big, and round, and rosy-cheeked, and my heart yearns for them.

A fourth apple.

Who can resist the allurements of their rosy cheeks? — Could Adam? Nay. — Could Eve? Nay. — Can Sammy?

In another moment I am in the street, enveloped in a cloud of dust, rubbing elbows with a mud-bespattered youth of hideous aspect and ferocious mien, and my voice is raised in yearning and solicitude to inquire in earsplitting accents: "How is Reisenberg? How is Reisenberg?"

The little woman recognises me, beams upon me, and rewards me with an apple. I almost devour it. Almost, but not quite, for the mud-bespattered youth wrests it from me and forthwith devours it himself. O agony! Accursed fate — thrice, thrice accursed fate!

The fifth apple evades me, but the sixth is mine; and, hugging it tightly, I scamper up the front stoop to eat it peacefully in the shelter of the doorway.

The horse stops, and the wagon stops, and the little woman clambers down from her throne, and the driver carries her furniture up the stairway of our house, and all the boys clamber upon the wagon and dance a jig thereon in the driver's absence.

So Becky moves in, and takes up her residence with us.

I am now old enough to attend the public school; so one fine morning I dress myself in my Sabbath clothes, draw forth the flaming red tie which my mother has purchased in

honour of the occasion, rub my face with soapy water until it shines, and, holding my mother proudly by the hand, descend the steps and hasten schoolward.

My mother walks along slowly, and I am obliged to restrain my excitement and my impatience, and to skip along at her side, holding her hand, and chattering incessantly until we reach the Wickliffe Street Public School.

It is a two story brick building with a gable roof, and some distance above its entrance is a marble slab containing the mysterious inscription:

PUBLIC NO. 6

A. D. 1848.

This inscription has been a source of much perplexity to me ever since it was read to me by a youth of the neighbourhood who had acquired the rudiments of the art of reading and had sought to impress me with his superior knowledge and attainments. The result of our joint interpretation of this mysterious inscription was that an inquiry as to whether the school was open to the entire Public was followed by an emphatic No, and that this was succeeded by the test of one's educational qualifications for admission to the school, namely, the ability to add 6 to 1848.

Hence it was that I had again and again repeated to myself the sum total of this problem in addition until I had committed it to memory; and now, as I enter the portals of the school, and prepare for the problem to be submitted to me by the principal, I repeat over and over again the answer ringing through my brain: eight-ee-hund-erd-an'-fift-ee-four-eight-ee-hund-erd-an'-fift-ee-four.

We enter the office of the principal, and a tall man with a bald head and brown whiskers looks up from the desk at

which he is seated, and beckons us to a seat. I am prepared for the ordeal which is to serve as a test of my educational qualifications, but am a little shaky in the legs, and a little dry about the roof of my mouth. Casual utterances of divers youths bearing upon the horrors of 'saminations unaccountably come into my recollection and suddenly fill me with fear and bewilderment. I realise that I am now in the presence of Prinstipal, and am nervously awaiting the question of the hour: "6 add to 1848 is — what?"

Inwardly I am repeating the answer — over and over and over again, lest it escape me — and the longer I wait the more intent do I grow upon holding fast to it, until I see nothing, hear nothing, know nothing but eight-een-hund-erd-an'-fift-ee-four.

At last Prinstipal looks up, and speaks. I do not know what he says: I do not wait for him to finish his sentence. I assure myself that he is speaking, and wait for nothing more. Scarcely has he opened his lips to address my mother, when the answer which has been waiting on the tip of my tongue bursts forth from its prison.

"Eight-een-hund-erd-an'-fift-ee-four," I stammer forth, and then sink back in my chair with a big, deep sigh of relief.

Prinstipal stares at me in surprise. So does my mother. Something is wrong. Is it possible that I have made a mistake?

"Eight-een-hund-erd-an'-fift-ee-four," I repeat manfully, though not without a feeling that there is some horrible mistake somewhere in my calculations; and then, as I note the look of perplexity upon his countenance, a feeling of wretchedness and of bitter disappointment sweeps over me, for now the dreadful fact is borne in upon me that my 'saminations have proved an utter failure, and that



I stand before the world convicted of ignorance and stupidity.

"Don't cry, little boy," he says kindly. I choke back my tears, and stifle my sobs, and cling desperately to my mother's hand, as she presses me to her, and kisses my forehead, and whispers soothing words to me in that soft, low voice of hers which is music fashioned into speech.

"Come, my little man," says Prinstipal, with a smile, as he rises from his seat and takes my hand. I turn beseechingly to my mother; but she does not rise to accompany me. With a horrible sinking of the heart I begin to realise that she has deserted me, that she is about to surrender me to the strange man whose name is Prinstipal, and that I have no Mamma any more.

"Mamma!" I sob, with one last, appealing cry, as my heartless captor and I step out into the hall. She puts her handkerchief to her eyes, and for one moment I venture to hope that I have moved her. But no: she loves me no more.

"I'll take care of him," says Prinstipal. "He'll get over his crying spell soon."

Stolen from Mamma, held captive by Prinstipal, I am ushered into the presence of another formidable personage, to me hitherto an utter stranger, but henceforth to be known as Teacher.

I have heard of her. She is cruel and merciless. She keeps boys after school. She curbs the speech which is their gift from God. She insists upon a statuesque immobility during school hours, which is petrifying to youthful limbs. He who crosses the threshold of her room must thenceforth forswear laughter, speech, freedom of action, and all that makes life worth living. Aye, I have heard of her, and her name is Teacher.

She has another name, and, having once heard it, it clings to my memory tenaciously. Her other name is

Mosquito Weather. It is a peculiar name, and one that is not readily forgotten.

My mother insists that it is Miss Kiesewetter, but my mother is mistaken. All the children call her Mosquito Weather. I call her Mosquito Weather. Prinstipal addresses her as Mosquito Weather. Mosquito Weather she is, and Mosquito Weather she remains, to the end of my schooldays.

Mosquito Weather wears glasses, and I suspect that she possesses glass eyes. My mother has assured me that Teacher will love me because I am good and smart; but it is only too evident that Mosquito Weather does not love me. She directs me to a desk, and thereafter ignores my existence. She does not look at me: she does not speak to me: she does not kiss me once during the entire morning session. Alas! it is but too evident that she does not see me because her eyes are made of glass. Tom Timmons has a glass eye which he once removed for my edification upon tender of a beautiful squirming caterpillar; but I have no caterpillars in my pocket this day, and I am afraid to make of Mosquito Weather the request which trembles upon my tongue.

I attend school regularly, and in time I learn that Teacher is kind and gentle to obedient boys, and that she can smile upon me, and can even kiss me on rare occasions.

I learn divers songs, but cannot retain the melodies nor understand the words. The very first song which I learn is entitled "Sparkling Sunshine" and begins thus:

"I love to see the sunshine which swuckles in the sky —  
Which swuckles in the sky — which swock — which swuckles in the sky."

Coincident with my eager absorption of the swocking sunshine song I learn the opening words of a popular

melody of childhood, and forthwith sing lustily with fervor and enthusiasm.

“Twinkle, twinkle, lit the star,  
How I won the hot choo car!  
Bubabub the worl’ so high  
Like a dime on in the sky.”

At the end of the term I am promoted. How my breast swells with pride, how by heart sings, how my eyes dance as I hurry home to convey the joyous tidings to my mother! Did I say hurry home? Nay, I fly home: I annihilate space: my feet spurn the ground: they are no longer limbs, but wings: they bear me onward: they raise me aloft as though I were upborne by pinions — and thus it is that I reach my home, rush up the stairs, burst open the door, and, with face shining with happiness, shout at the top of my voice:

“Mamma, I’m pemoted! — I’m pemoted! — I’m pemoted!”

I cannot calm down immediately, for my feet will not permit me to remain quiet. They persist in dancing and in hopping; and dance and hop I must around the kitchen floor, over the warped, uncarpeted boards, up the room, and down the room, and across the room, and along the side of the room, with a shout, and a song, and a laugh, and a ’rah, ’rah, ’rah, and a la la la, and backward and forward, and finally straight across to rest exhausted but happy in my mother’s arms, with her tears and kisses of joy upon my flushed cheeks.



## CHAPTER V

I ACCOMPANY THE LITTLE WOMAN TO A LAWYER'S OFFICE,  
FORM THE ACQUAINTANCE OF THE OFFICE BOY, AND  
FIND MY MOTHER ILL

"I'm going to the lawyer to-day," says Becky to my mother, as she sits upon a chair in the kitchen and gazes out of the window.

Becky is always going to the lawyer. Not always to the same lawyer. Oh, no. Becky has many friends among the members of the bar, and she hops from one to the other like a little sparrow.

Not that sparrows seem especially attracted to the offices of the legal fraternity. Sometimes they chirp and twitter as they sit upon telegraph wires and peer into the offices on Broad Street wherein the sorrows of a world find expression and seek relief; sometimes (but rarely) they find some tree still standing upon the busy street, and from a leafy branch behold dark and dusty interiors, and desks littered with scraps of paper, envelopes and briefs. But, as the sparrows hop from wire to wire, and from branch to branch, and from window to window, so, with her little legs, the queer little lady seems to hop from office to office, and from lawyer to lawyer.

It seems that she has a wealthy sister living in another state, and that this sister mails her every month a money order for fifty dollars, which would be ample for her needs if there were not so many fruit stands which require patronage scattered throughout the city. Generally the money order arrives in the course of the first

week of the month; but sometimes it is delayed, owing to the machinations of the nefarious Reisenberg who, though residing in the city of Newark, exerts his malevolent influence to hinder and delay the transmission through the mails of any postal matter addressed to his abused and unfortunate victim.

Reisenberg is shrewd and clever; he is cold and unscrupulous; but let him not imagine that the object of his animosity will calmly submit to these outrages, nor seek relief. Armed with a handbag filled with fruit, she is prepared to descend upon the courts of law and to demand her rights. Forth she sallies, with her little hat perched defiantly upon her head, and the faded flowers thereon nodding a challenge to the world, as she seeks the dens of the sturdy champions of the law, to demand vengeance upon Reisenberg and upon his innumerable hirelings scattered throughout the land.

Then do the scribes indite epistles to the sister couched in language so forceful and persuasive that Reisenberg is daunted and succumbs. Forthwith arrives the delayed money order (sometimes on the very day whereon the champion of the law has been consulted), thus vindicating the efficiency of Law and the power of its votaries.

But some lawyers there be whose epistles elicit no immediate response. No immediate response? sniffs Becky contemptuously. Tell that to the marines, but not to my friend Becky. For Becky is wise, Becky is not easily to be hoodwinked, Becky can read the lawyer's mind and can recognise the hireling of Reisenberg in that confession of impotence.

No sooner does she penetrate the villain's disguise than forth she sallies to seek some legal mind unblighted, as yet, by the sinister influence of her deadly foe. Hence it is that, at the bottom of her handbag, a score of cards

repose, each bearing upon its face the name and address of some false and faithless minion of the law whom Reisenberg has purchased and has made his own.

"I'm going to the lawyer to-day," says Becky.

"Which one?" inquires my mother.

"I don't know his name, but I've got his card." She climbs down from her chair, and approaches my mother mysteriously. "My sister sent him some money for me. Lots of it." Then, with a broad smile and a knowing wink, she adds: "I know all about it: the policeman told me."

"What policeman?" queries my mother, dubiously.

"The one on the corner."

She enters her bedroom and reappears, a few minutes later, with her hat upon her head, and her bag in her hand.

"Do you want to come with me?" she says to me. I am home from school (it being almost four o'clock) and I should be glad to take a walk with her, but I am not sure that my mother would approve of my going, so I glance at my parent inquiringly.

"You can go," she says simply; "but keep fast hold of her hand."

So Becky and I descend the stairs and walk along the streets, hand in hand. We have not proceeded far when we meet a policeman who says: "Hello, Becky! How is Reisenberg?"

Becky whispers in my ear: "That's him." Then, shaking her forefinger at him confidentially, she says joyously: "I'm going down to get it."

The officer halts, and gazes at her in perplexity. "To get what?"

Becky's face is one huge grin as she shakes her finger at him. "You know," she answers; "you know what."



But the policeman evidently does not know what, for he says to her: "What are you talking about, anyhow?"

"The money. You know what. The money."

The officer's face clears. He bends down until his face is close to hers (and he is so tall that he must bend very low indeed to approach her face) and says in a low voice: "You just get it from the lawyer. He's got it all right."

"Five thousand dollars?" whispers Becky smilingly.

"Sure. At least that."

Becky pokes me in the ribs with her forefinger, and says triumphantly: "Didn't I tell you?" And then she says good-bye to the big policeman, and we resume our walk down town.

It is a very pleasant day in spring, and the sun is shining upon us as we walk down Central Avenue, and turn into Broad Street, and walk toward Market Street.

Before going to the lawyer's office we enter Military Park, and seat ourselves on one of the benches, and watch the tide of travel sweep up and down Broad Street as the afternoon throng hastens along.

We sit for half an hour in the park, and then rise and pursue our way. At last we reach a brick building which stands next to the city's oldest church; and here we enter an elevator, and I hold the little woman tightly by the hand, for I have never been in an elevator before, and we reach the third floor of the building, and I step out with a sigh of relief. We pause a moment before a door which proclaims this to be the entrance to the law office of Nathan Cuss, and then Becky opens the door, and we enter.

The anteroom is quite dark; and from it three doors containing big panes of ground glass lead into three separate offices. There are panes of ground glass set into

the partitions which separate the offices from the ante-room, and through this glass the light shines dimly into the room which we enter.

A boy of about fourteen is seated at a little table, reading a paper volume as we enter.

"Hello!" says my companion amiably.

"Hello!" returns the Office Boy; "how is Reisenberg?"

Again.— Even here! — Marvellous!

"He's all right," answers Becky. "Want an apple?"

He does. She produces one from her handbag and tenders it. He accepts it condescendingly, and without thanks, but devours it with relish.

"Is he in?" queries Becky, pointing toward one of the glass doors.

"Naw. Gotta wait."

Accordingly we seat ourselves, and await the arrival of Mr. Cuss. The Office Boy munches the apple and resumes his reading.

"Law?" inquires the little woman, pointing to the book in whose pages the youth is engrossed.

"Naw. Detective stories," is the reply.

"You like law?"

"Naw. Hate it."

"My!" murmurs my companion in shocked accents.

"Why don't you like it?"

"'Cause it's punk."

The shock of this disclosure upon the mind of Becky produces a silence of several minutes during which she gazes at the youth in horrified wonder. Then she whispers in my ears in mournful accents: "What is punk?"

"Rotten," I promptly reply. Her worst fears being confirmed, she can only stare at the youth in dismay, as he turns the pages of his book and devours its contents.

But Becky cannot long remain silent. Gradually her face resumes its genial expression; then she begins to fidget and squirm in her chair; and finally she breaks the silence by inquiring:

"What's the name of that book?"

"Old Sleuth."

"Is it a nice book?"

"Nice?" The youth raises his eyebrows in mild surprise. "Beats them law books all hollow."

"Does it?" queries Becky with interest.

"Sure."

"Ain't law books nice reading?"

"Punk," sniffs the Office Boy.

"Punk?" repeats Becky with a broad smile.

"Sure, punk."

"Have an apple," says Becky, producing one.

The apple is accepted in the same condescending spirit as marked the acceptance of the first one, and is devoured with equal relish and without thanks. But the apple is big, and red, and juicy, and its mission is propitiatory; so much so that the youth thaws perceptibly, and even volunteers a remark.

"Apples is good," he declares, "an' detective stories is good, an' Indian stories is all right; but Blackstone is bum, an' law is punk."

As he speaks, he draws from his pocket a box of cigarettes and lights one, alternately puffing at the cigarette and munching the apple, and appearing to enjoy both in equal measure.

"He's a smart boy," whispers Becky to me. "He's got a good head."

"Now dere's Blackstone," pursues the Office Boy. "He —"



"What kind o' stone is that?" inquires Becky, with great interest.

"He ain' no stone: he's a duffer wot wrote a book. An' he's dead, an' dey make a guy read his books anyhow. Now wot d'ye t'ink o' dat?"

Becky thinks it awful. "I wouldn't read the book of any dead man," says Becky, "not if he was the best man living."

"An' den et takes so long te be a lawyer. Ye start when ye're a kid jist out o' school, an' ye ends wit' w'is-kers. An' w'en ye t'ink ye're t'roo wit' it ye gotta start over agin 'cause by dat time ye're so old that ye've forgotten all ye learned w'en ye wuz young. No lawyer fer me, t'ank ye," he concludes with a sage look; "I'd radder be out on de plains wit' de cowboys and de buckin' bronchos. Dat's de kind o' guy I am."

"He's a smart boy," whispers Becky for the second time. "He's got a smart head."

He must have caught something of her whisper, for he asks her what she is talking about.

"I said you'd make a smart lawyer," says Becky, with a smile of admiration.

"Oh, I know dat," murmurs the youth complacently; "but den —"

"You've got a good head on you," adds my companion, as she nods her head to emphasise her assertion.

"Sure. Any one kin tell dat," assents the Office Boy modestly.

"You could beat them all," concludes the little woman, with a final nod of her head which shakes the flowers on her hat until they seem in danger of flying off. "You could beat them all, I bet."

"Sure, I could," the youth assents complacently.

"But wot's de use o' makin' de perfession jealous? Et's on'y punk anyway, so wot's de use?"

He flings his cigarette away, and listens. The sound of the elevator door being slid back is heard, and a moment later Mr. Cuss opens the door, and enters. He is a dark young man with a short black moustache, and thin black hair which is receding from his forehead. He greets Becky pleasantly, and asks her how she is, and then, sniffing the air, he inquires of the Office Boy whether there isn't smoke in the room, to which the youth replies that there is, and that ye can't keep de smoke from dat restaurant down stairs out o' de buildin' nohow.

"Well, what can I do for you to-day?" he queries, turning to the little woman.

"Money," she chuckles; "you know."

"What money?" he asks in perplexity.

"My five thousand dollars." She scrambles down from the chair, and shakes her little forefinger in his face in the drollest manner, as she says it, and screws up her brow until her twinkling eyes resemble little brown gems, and yet, although her whole face is one broad smile, there is something wistful in her expression which seems to appeal to the lawyer, for he says gently: "I'm afraid somebody has been deceiving you. I have no money for you."

"Oh, yes you have," she persists. "The policeman told me. Five thousand dollars. You've got it in your pocket." Then, hastily taking her black bag from the chair whereon she had deposited it, she says smilingly: "Wait! I got something for you," and draws forth a chrysanthemum and a carnation which she offers to Mr. Cuss. He accepts them with reluctance, and thanks her, and scolds her lightly for spending her money on others when she could use it for herself; but she merely smiles, and dives into the bag, and draws forth an apple, a pear,

and a bunch of grapes, and deposits them upon a desk, and says: "I'll bring you some more next time." Then, having relieved herself of her purchases, and having assured herself that the bag is quite empty, and that not even a single grape has escaped her liberality, she turns to the lawyer with her droll smile and says: "Well, I ain't got my money yet."

"But really —"

"Oh, I know all about it," she persists, with her little forefinger close to her nose in an effort to impress him with her cunning and sagacity. "I know all about it. You've got it in your pocket."

This latter assertion is delivered with such an air of triumph as indicates her absolute confidence in the shrewdness and infallibility of her judgment. "Give it to me," she says laughingly, "and you can keep ten dollars for yourself."

"But I tell you —" begins the lawyer, remonstratingly.

"Fifteen," she interrupts — "fifteen dollars for yourself, and I'll bring you apples and geraniums the next time I come around. So there!"

She holds out her hand to receive the money demanded by her; but Mr. Cuss only shakes his head, and tells her that he is sorry, but he is very busy, and wouldn't she come around some other day?

So she takes my hand in hers and gaily nods a farewell to Mr. Cuss and to the Abhorrer of Law seated at his desk. But the latter beckons to me, and, when I drew near, he inquires in a whisper, whether I am her son. I answer No, whereupon he murmurs: "She's got rats in her belfry." My face evidently betrays my perplexity, for he whispers, in elucidation of his cryptic utterance, that "she's got rooms to rent in her upper story." I hasten to assure him that she occupies but one room in



our house, and that she has no rooms to rent as they all belong to my mother, whereat he appears to be highly amused, and tells me that I'm a soft kid, and that some day I'll git de soap out o' my mouth, which is so incomprehensible to me that I descend the elevator in a dazed condition, and walk along Broad Street in a very perplexed frame of mind.

"Wot's a belfry?" I finally inquire of my companion.

"A what?"

"A belfry."

"I don't know," says Becky; "but if it's something to eat we can get it in the market."

"De boy says you got some rats in yer belfry."

"Wot boy?" queries the little woman with a frown of perplexity.

"De boy in de office."

"Oh, him?" says Becky, her face clearing. "He's a smart boy, and he knows what he's talkin' about. He's pretty nearly a lawyer."

"But wot's a belfry?"

"I don't know. Guess it's in the law books."

"I don't see no rats," I murmur, after some deliberation.

"I got some under the bed at home," says Becky, "but they only come at night, and they go away as soon as I throw my shoes at them. Maybe that's what he means."

We stop at the market to purchase some apples and pears. No sooner do we enter, than Becky is greeted from all sides, and from every stand that we pass comes some inquiry as to the state of health of the famous Mr. Reisenberg. The butcher-stands, and the oyster-stands, and the pickle-stands, and the fish-stands — all are interested in Becky and in Reisenberg, and all shout forth a cheery greeting, and jest with her, and inquire how much

money is due her, and suggest that it's about time she changed lawyers, and evince such interest in her affairs that she forthwith authorises a red-faced butcher boy to write a letter to her lawyer informing the latter that she desires forthwith to dispense with his services.

"Wot should I write?" inquires the Butcher Boy with an amiable grin.

"Write 'I don't want you any more.'"

"Anything else?" queries the Butcher Boy, after having written as directed.

"No."

"Well, here it is. 'I don't want you any more.' Now sign it."

So the little woman signs it, and mails it, and says with a sigh of relief: "I've been with him long enough. It's about time I changed lawyers anyhow."

By this time it is dusk, and I am anxious to reach home. Mother has frequently enjoined me to be indoors before nightfall lest the evening air bring on a cold. I don't think that the cough which racks mother so frequently was caused by the night air, for she herself has stated that she caught a cold on the day on which we were dispossessed, and that her rain-soaked garments chilled her through and through. She has been coughing and coughing day after day for a long time past, and for a whole year she has been losing weight and growing paler. She is not so sick as to require a doctor, for one does not require a physician for a cold, and doctors cost a lot of money, and her little boy always needs something new to wear, and where will the money come from if the doctor is to be paid?

Becky cannot always pay her rent promptly, and mother is not kept occupied all the time, and the work at the tub sometimes brings on a pain in the chest which is

very distressing. But mother frequently tells me that, when she grows stronger, she will earn a lot of money for her little boy, and that she will then buy me new shoes whenever the old ones begin to wear out, and a new suit of clothes twice a year (one for summer and one for winter) and that then we shall live like a queen and a little prince.

I am quite content to go about in my old, worn-out clothes, but sometimes mother feels discouraged and weeps, and then I weep also, for I cannot bear to see the tears upon those dear cheeks, and to hear the sobs which shake that soft, sweet voice of hers.

To-day I am very anxious to reach home ere nightfall, for I know that mother will be at the window anxiously waiting for me. But she is not at the window. There is no one at the window. The front door is open, and one of the neighbours is entering hurriedly, and in front of the house a carriage is standing, and two little boys are upon the sidewalk, dividing their attention between the horse which is harnessed to the carriage, and the stairway leading up to the rooms which we occupy.

“Hello, Sammy!” says one of the boys. “Yer mudder’s sick.”

I drop Becky’s hand with a cry, and rush up the stairs. There are two women in the kitchen. One is Mrs. Kapper, the wife of the saloonkeeper downstairs, and the other is Mrs. O’Leary, the neighbour whom I saw enter as I approached the house. I pay no attention to them, nor to the restraining hands which they extend as they see me rush into the bedroom. Into the bedroom to where a man with a watch in one hand is feeling my mother’s pulse with the other — up to the bed, and to the silent figure lying outstretched with her white face resting upon the white pillows, and a streak of something red, which resembles blood, upon her lips.



“Mamma!” I shriek. “Mamma!”

The man, who appears to be a physician, rises hurriedly, and pushes me roughly into the kitchen.

“Quiet!” he says imperatively. “Do you want to kill your mother?”

I had thought for the moment that she was dead; but even the assurance that she is still living cannot quiet me, or still the sobs which break from me involuntarily.

“Mamma!” I wail. “Mamma! Mamma! I want my Mamma! Mamma — dear!”

## CHAPTER VI

### WHEREIN I MEET REISENBERG AND AM BEREFT OF MY MOTHER

Days of darkness, and sadness, and loneliness. Days when I feel so helpless and sick at heart that I know not what to do or where to go for relief, but wander up and down the stairs, and in and out of the house aimlessly. I am only a child; but my mother has always been my play-mate and companion, and without her I feel utterly lost.

Slowly mother appears to grow stronger; but she will never again be well and healthy as she was when I was a little child. She coughs frequently during the day, and at such times evidently suffers from a sore tooth which begins to bleed, causing her to expectorate little clots of blood. I urge her to have the tooth extracted, but she says that she has no time to bother with dentists; so every fit of coughing draws a little blood from that sore tooth and causes her much distress.

The summer passes; and the winter passes, and summer comes round again, and still my mother is not well. It is true that she does her washing and ironing; but the work appears to exhaust her, and the fits of coughing which attack her in the night time leave her little time for rest.

I attend school regularly, and make great progress in my studies. I learn to read and to write; and when I address my first letter to mother on *Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish New Year, she is so proud of my work that she pur-

chases a frame for my letter for ten cents, and hangs the missive upon the wall.

"My little Sammy did that," she informs all the neighbors, and I am petted and complimented, and feel very proud and dignified. The queer little lady who boards with us is also very proud of my work, and forthwith proceeds to adorn the frame with carnations, geraniums and celery stalks until my missive is quite lost amid the encircling floral tributes.

One day my mother goes out to make some purchases, and I am left alone at home with our lodger. She has been acting very mysteriously to-day, peering out of the window a score of times, gazing up and down the street with an expectant look upon her face, scrutinising the passers-by, and darting back and forth so often that I finally stop my play to watch her movements. She is at the window for the twentieth time, peering anxiously up and down the street, when suddenly she chuckles, scrambles down from her chair, tiptoes cautiously across the room to where I am kneeling upon the floor, and, putting her finger to her lip to enjoin silence, whispers mysteriously: "Sh — sh — sh! He's coming."

"Who?"

She does not answer immediately. First she tiptoes to the window and gives a momentary peep into the street; then, in great excitement, she tiptoes back again and enjoins silence; finally she retreats a few steps so that she may better mark the effect of her words, and then, with a dramatic sweep of her hand, she whispers hoarsely: "Reisenberg is coming."

For a moment I am paralysed with terror. Reisenberg, the hobgoblin of my youth — Reisenberg the mysterious — Reisenberg the formidable, the malevolent, the satanic one — Reisenberg is coming! I am so frightened



that I cannot speak: I cannot cry: I am dumb with terror.

But Becky is not terror-stricken. On the contrary, her face beams with enjoyment of the situation. She chuckles, she smiles, even while whispering in my ear that he's a bad man and will eat me up: she tiptoes about the room, darting here and there, and murmuring that it'll be a wonder if he don't swallow me alive; she runs to me, and clasps me, and assures me that she's half dead with fright, and whispers in my ears: What'll she do if he kills her? but I am too frightened to care much about what she would do in that mournful event: I am too deeply concerned about what *I* should do if *I* should prove to be the unfortunate victim of his wrath: so I do not speak to her: I only murmur some Hebrew prayer and wish that mamma were here to save me from the evil one.

"Let's hide!" suggests Becky.

"Where?" I wail.

"Under the bed."

So into mother's bedroom we tiptoe softly, and creep under the bed, and there I lie quaking whilst my companion whispers soothingly that maybe he won't eat me all up: maybe he'll only bite my head off, and then I'll still have my feet left to walk with.

And even as she whispers thus, I hear some steps ascending the stairs, and then a light tapping at the kitchen door.

No response. We remain silent. My lips are trembling; my hands are shaking; I am faint with fright. I dare not look at my companion lest her dread of the mysterious visitor overpower me; but I have no doubt that she, too, is quaking with fear, and that her heart is fluttering like mine. Suddenly, as a vision of her terrified face flits before me in the darkness, and I clutch her arm

in the kinship which terror inspires, her voice comes to me through the gloom, and —

“Ain’t it fun?” chuckles Becky.

Fun? The words daze, stun, bewilder me as I lie there, too terrified to move. Another knock upon the door, followed by a third knock, and then I hear the kitchen door open as some one enters.

“Now,” whispers my companion gleefully, “he’s going to eat us up.”

“Hello!” calls the visitor in a shrill, high pitched voice. “Anybody at home?”

“Don’t answer,” whispers Becky, “or we’re done for.”

Her warning is unnecessary. I do not answer. I am too frightened to answer. I could not if I would.

“Where are you, Becky?” queries the visitor.

“Ain’t it fun?” chuckles Becky for the second time.

There is a moment of silence; then “Where are you hiding, Becky?” he calls aloud. “Under the bed, as usual?”

I tighten my clutch upon her arm as I hear the terrible ogre’s steps drawing near — across the kitchen floor, into the bedroom, up to the bed (“We’re done for,” murmurs Becky in my ears), and the next moment I see, bending down and peering beneath the bed, one of the mildest, pleasantest, most agreeable countenances I have ever beheld.

Never was child more surprised than I.

“O ho!” laughs Reisenberg, shaking his head jovially; “so you’re up to the old, old trick,—and found again, as usual! Well, well! Ha, ha, ha!”

His laughter is so infectious that my fear suddenly takes flight. The little woman scrambles forth from beneath the bed, and I follow her, dazed and bewildered.

“Don’t let him fool you,” she whispers in my ears as I

rise to my feet. "He's a bad one, and he'll eat us both if we ain't careful."

But her warning no longer carries conviction to my ears. Somehow I cannot impute cannibalistic tendencies to that mild and laughing countenance, nor can I associate evil with those clear blue eyes which gaze at me curiously as I emerge from beneath the bed.

"Hello! young man," he says cordially; "what's your name?"

"Don't tell him," whispers Becky, "or he'll bite your head off."

"Sammy Gordin," I reply timidly.

"Well, Sammy," he pursues smilingly, "Becky hasn't forgotten to tell you about me, has she?"

"No, sir."

"Who am I?"

"Reisenberg."

"And what's my business, little man?"

"You eat 'em alive an' bite dere heads off," I promptly answer.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he roars, shaking with laughter. "Ha, ha, ha! That's a good one. Ha, ha, ha!" And so heartily does he laugh, that, ere I am aware of it, my features, too, relax, and my lips part, and I join in the merriment, and even the little woman smiles as though she enjoys the scene. And then, when we quiet down for a moment, he steps up to her, and slaps her lightly upon the shoulder, and shouts: "Hello, Becky! How is Reisenberg?" whereat we all laugh again, and he loudest of all, and I conclude that he is the drollest man that I have ever met, and not at all like the boy-devouring ogres whose acquaintance I have formed through the pages of "Jack the Giant Killer" and other illustrated juvenile blood-curdlers. But the little woman, suddenly realising



that my fears of Reisenberg have vanished, grows exceedingly perturbed; so much so that she checks her smile to gravely whisper in my ears her conviction that he's a bad one and I better not believe him but look out before my head flies off.

Her words no longer disturb me. I have seen pictures of ogres, and of hideous giants, and of evil dwarfs; but the Reisenberg who stands before me is neither ogre, giant, nor dwarf, but merely a jovial, jolly, good natured individual, with the drollest of ways, and the most infectious of laughs.

"Well, Becky, how are you getting along?" he inquires, after his laughter has subsided.

"No good," she replies.

"Why, what's the matter?"

"You know," she says curtly.

"No, I don't," he assures her.

"Where's my five thousand dollars?"

"Oh! so it's five thousand this time! Well, who's got it?" he says, with a droll look of resignation.

"The lawyer; but you're keeping it back — you know you are."

"Am I? Well, Becky," he laughs, "here's five dollars for apples and geraniums; but don't spend it all at once. Keep some for next week."

She takes the money, smiles faintly as she puts it into the pocket of her skirt, and assures him that if he doesn't give her the balance of her five thousand she won't ever speak to him again, so he'd better hand it over now, right away, or maybe there'll be trouble and they'll hang him.

The mental picture of Reisenberg suspended by a rope fills her with such satisfaction that she chuckles, and assures him that that'll be lots of fun, and laughs aloud, and Reisenberg laughs also, and says that it'll be lots of

fun, but not for him, whereat we all laugh more loudly than before. Then he puts on his hat and says that he must be going, but he won't forget to send us all invitations for the hanging, and we laugh again, and he shakes hands with Becky and with me, and takes his departure.

No sooner has the door closed upon him than the little woman gravely warns me that he's a bad one, oh, he's a terrible one: he eats little boys and chews off their heads, and the best thing to do now is to crawl under the bed again and hide. I am loath to do so, now that my fears have vanished, whereupon she regales me with such a vivid picture of the inconvenience to which little boys are subjected when doomed to walk this earth with their heads bitten off that I am half persuaded to return to my hiding place, when suddenly a cheery voice from the street reaches us.

"Becky!" calls Reisenberg, and Becky tiptoes to the window and peeps out.

"Hello, Becky! How is Reisenberg?" laughs the jovial individual referred to, and then follows a Ha ha ha! and another Ha, ha, ha! and so vanishes the mysterious Reisenberg and the terrible bogie-man of my childhood.

. . . . .

But not all my fears pass away so lightly and so happily. One fear there is which is nameless as yet and which oppresses me whenever my mother clasps me tightly (I had almost said fiercely) to her breast, as she so often does, and wails: "My lambkin! My lambkin! What will become of my lambkin when I am gone?"

"W'ere are you goin', mamma?" I ask her wonderingly; but she only clasps me tighter, and weeps aloud.

"Are you goin' to New York?" I query, calling to

mind that great world beyond, which I have never seen, but of which I have often heard. She does not answer; but only rocks me in her arms and weeps bitterly.

"Alone! Alone!" she breaks forth, after an interval of silence. "My little lambkin left all alone!"

"W'y don' ye take me wit' ye?" I ask her; but she only sobs and moans: "Alone! All alone in this strange world!"

I am greatly perplexed. If she feels so badly at the thought of going away, why does she insist upon going? Why does she not rather decide to remain where we reside at present? And if she persists in going, and feels sad at the thought of leaving me, why does she not take me with her so that neither of us may be left alone?

I puzzle over this question very often; but I have such faith in her love for me that I finally cease to question either her or myself, feeling confident that whatever she does is right. To leave me alone would assuredly not be right, and my dear mother would surely not do something which was wrong.

So I seek to lay my fears to rest, and to quell my misgivings, and yet I cannot help wondering and wondering why my mother should talk so often in so singular a strain. And ever when she presses her lambkin to her breast and breaks forth into lamentation, that nameless fear of which I have spoken creeps into that child's heart and makes it flutter like a frightened bird's.

One day (I can never forget that day, for on it my childhood dropped suddenly into the gloom) I come home from school and find my mother lying upon the floor unconscious. There is a pool of blood close to her head, and at first I think that she is dead. I scream in terror, and continue to scream while people come running up the stairs; and I scream while they lift her from the floor and



lay her upon her bed; and I continue to scream while some kind woman (I have forgotten who it was) takes me up in her arms and kisses me and pets me; and my screams do not subside until the doctor comes, and pours some medicine down my throat which makes me drowsy, and sends me into a deep sleep.

When I awake I am lying upon the bed in the little woman's room, and it is quite dark. In the kitchen a kerosene lamp burns dimly, and casts its yellow light through the open doorway into the bedroom wherein I lie. I struggle to a sitting posture, and, in the semi-darkness, recognise Becky, who is seated at the bedside.

"Now, don't cry any more," says Becky; "it's all right."

But it is not all right. There suddenly comes back to my mind a picture of the pale, emaciated face upon the floor, and of the pool of blood close to that white countenance, and I whimper that I want my mamma, I want my mamma.

Some one enters the room on tiptoe and says: "Sh — sh — sh! Your mamma's sleepin'. Be a good boy and don't wake her." In the darkness I recognise the voice of Mrs. Maxman, and wonder what she is doing here, and whether my mother sent for her. I pay no heed to her injunction, but continue to whimper wretchedly that I want my mamma, I want my mamma. After a moment, another woman comes to the bedside, and I recognise Mrs. Greenbaum, who lived in our house in Prince Street, and I wonder vaguely what these former neighbors of ours are doing here, and whether they have come because mother is sick.

"Take him in," says Mrs. Greenbaum. "She wants him."

I become aware of my mother's voice faintly calling me

by name and moaning: "Where is he? Where is my little lambkin? Where?"

I am lifted from my bed by Mrs. Maxman, and am carried through the kitchen into the bedroom where my mother is lying, with her pale face resting upon the white pillows, and her long, black hair uncoiled, and her beautiful brown eyes roving restlessly about the room.

I shall never forget the look in her eyes as she sees me — the indescribable glow of mother-love which irradiates her features as she catches sight of me. I see her still, transfigured and grown strangely beautiful, stretching out those thin white arms of hers, and whispering with infinite tenderness: "My sweet little baby boy! My —" and then I am lying beside her on the pillow, and her face is pressed against mine, and her kisses cover my cheeks, and I wonder why her eyes are wet, and why her soft murmurs of delight and tenderness suddenly give way to bitter sobs, and why she breaks forth into a heartrending wail, crying in agony. "Alone! Alone! What will become of my tender little lambkin?"

I nestle close up to her, with my face against hers, and my arm about her neck, and, being but a child, do not vex my soul with questions, but am quite content to lie thus, and prepare to resume my sleep. But I am not permitted to remain long at my mother's side. The doctor comes shortly upon the scene (after having been absent for an hour) and roundly scolds the women for exciting the patient.

"Outrageous!" he storms. "What do you mean by exciting her? Do you want to kill her? Take that child away!"

I am torn from her side, and am borne, sobbing, back to the little bedroom whence I came.

"Don't cry," says Becky, soothingly, resuming her

seat at the bedside. "I'll buy you some candy to-morrow if you're good."

So I forthwith become good, and endeavour to stifle the sobs which shake my form; and, after a time, the light which shines in from the kitchen grows dim, and finally vanishes entirely, and sleep closes my eyes and stills my sobs.

I think that I must have slept several hours before I was aroused. I know that my sleep was disturbed by hideous dreams, but cannot remember what I dreamt about, or how long I slept. I am aroused by some one who lifts me out of the bed, and, as I open my sleepy eyes, I hear the voice of Mrs. Maxman whispering brokenly: "Be a brave little boy. See your mamma. Be a brave little boy." And I wonder sleepily why she admonishes me to be brave, and why she is crying.

For she *is* crying, and so is Mrs. Greenbaum, and so is the little tailor whom I had not seen for a long time; and I wonder what he is doing here, and who sent for him. He is crying — everybody is crying — every one but the doctor, who is seated beside the bed, feeling her left wrist with his hand.

I gaze about me wonderingly. Who is that, standing in the shadow, and intoning some Hebrew prayer? Is it really Reb Joseph? And why does he cry, and what is he doing here, and who sent for him?

"*Sh'ma, Yisroel* —"

Why do they proclaim the unity of God here at my mother's bedside?

"*Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is One.*"

My frightened gaze wanders from face to face, and finally seeks the bed, and rests there.

How quiet she is, and how calmly she sleeps! — so



quiet and so calm that I would not have them wake her. Her face is pale and worn, but peaceful. Her dark hair frames it and sets off its pallor. The wasted arms, which were wont to clasp me so tenderly, rest lightly upon the coverlid. Her eyes are closed, and she's asleep.

"Don't wake her," I remonstrate, as Mrs. Maxman emits a loud wail. "Don' make so much noise. Don' wake 'er."

They pay no heed to my remonstrance, but redouble their cries.

"W'y don' ye let 'er sleep?" I say pettishly.

The doctor drops her hand, and rises.

"It is over," he says solemnly.

Over? What is over? Why do all the people weep aloud while my mother is sleeping?

"Don't cry," sobs Becky, putting her arm about my neck. And then she adds soothingly: "She died beautiful. I wouldn't want to die nicer myself."

Die? — Die? — Who died? — Who?

I suddenly emit a shriek of terror, and leap from Mrs. Maxman's arms, and, ere they can hold me back, I am at the bedside, with my arms about my mother's neck.

"Mamma!" I scream. "Mamma! Don' be dead! Please don'! O mamma — dear! Mamma — dear — ie!"

With gentle hands they loosen my hold of her, and bear me away, struggling and shrieking and calling upon God to bring back my mamma, please — O please bring back my mamma dear!

But no voice answers me. Though I scream, and pray, and implore her to come back, no voice answers me. And I know then that, pray and weep and struggle as I may, she will never come back to me again.

Never.— Never.

## CHAPTER VII

### WHEREIN I LEAVE HOME AND GO FORTH INTO THE WORLD

Mrs. Kapper, whose husband conducts the saloon on the floor below us, comes upstairs and insists upon my remaining with her during the rest of the night. So I am carried up to the attic, which contains two bedrooms, and Mrs. Kapper tells me a fairy story which is so absorbing that I forget my bereavement and insist upon a repetition of the tale; and, after a while, I fall asleep, just as the pumpkin is being, for the second time, transformed by the fairy into a coach.

When I awake it is broad day. I turn upon my pillow and call "Ma—," then stop short, and suddenly remember, and begin to sob. Mrs. Kapper enters from the adjoining bedroom, and inquires whether I slept well, and takes me downstairs to our kitchen, where Mrs. Maxman is heating coffee.

The door leading to my mother's room is closed, and, though my eyes wander constantly in that direction, it does not open. Mrs. Maxman relates to me many incidents affecting our former neighbours in Prince Street, and is so interesting and companionable that she persuades me to eat a hearty breakfast before I am fully aware of what I am doing. No sooner have I finished the meal than she insists upon my going downstairs to play with the children whose shouts rise from the street below.

I take my hat, and descend the stairs; and no sooner do I reach the street than I am surrounded by a circle

of youthful acquaintances whose looks of awe constitute the silent tribute which youth pays to the hero of some strange, mysterious adventure. After a hush of expectancy, I am besieged with questions bearing upon the event of the previous night.

Did I seen her die? — Did I seen her ghost? — Am I goin' to de cemetery? — How many carriages is dere goin' to be? — Am I goin' to ride in a carriage? — Red Blinders rode w'en his mudder died, an' he's been awful stuck up since.

I falter some faint replies which, however, fail to satisfy the eager queries of my companions. Patsy Bowers voices a suspicion that I'm mighty stuck up fer a feller wot ain't rode yet, an' maybe dere won't be no carriage an' he's got to walk; but I retort, with some degree of warmth, that dere will be a carriage an' maybe more'n one, too, an' Mrs. Maxman's goin' te ride in it, an' Mrs. Greenbaum, an' Reb Joseph an' me, an' maybe de tailor, too, 'cause Mrs. Maxman tole me all about it.

This information re-establishing my prestige, I am admitted to a game of "follow yer leader," wherein each youth endeavours to emulate a bold and venturesome chief-tain known as "de leader," who endeavours to perform exploits impossible of achievement by more timorous spirits. Patsy Bowers being chosen leader, the other youths, including myself, follow him through a maze of streets, down steep embankments, up a ladder resting against a building in course of construction, along the very edge of the canal embankment and finally half way up a tall telephone pole — the aim of the leader and of his followers being to determine how many perils they may invite and then deftly escape without suffering so much as a fractured limb or a broken neck.

These perils losing their fascination in the absence of



any casualty to either leader or followers, I finally leave my companions, and hasten homeward for the slice of bread and the apple which mother always keeps in reserve for her hungry boy. I rush up the front stoop, and am suddenly confronted by a bunch of black crape, which I had not observed before; and then I remember that my mother is dead, and that the slice of bread and the treasured apple will never again be handed to me by my mother's hands, and I sit down upon the bottom step within the hallway, and sob as though my heart were breaking.

"Come, Sammy, don't cry; be a good little boy," says Mrs. Maxman, descending the stairs and putting her arms about me; but the touch of sympathy in her voice only makes me sob louder; and not until a succulent lollipop woos me with its saccharine kiss is my grief assuaged.

When I arrive upstairs I find the little tailor seated at the window.

"Well, Sammy, are you a good boy?" he says, patting my cheek.

I nod my head in boyish recognition of my virtues.

"Of course you are," he says, stroking my hair with one hand, and with the other slipping a dime into my left hand so deftly that Mrs. Maxman never perceives it. Oh, he is a clever little tailor! I do not know how long that piece of money has reposed in his hand; but there it has remained in hiding awaiting my arrival, and never a whisper from the tailor apprised Mrs. Maxman of the presence of the little silver coin in his little warm palm.

I thank him in a whisper, and then hasten into Becky's bedroom, where my little tin savings bank stands upon a shelf, filled with more than a score of pennies which I have saved during the past year. The bank had been presented to me by my mother as a birthday present, and

very proud had she been as she watched the pennies slowly accumulating.

It is necessary for me to stand upon a chair in order to reach the shelf which supports the bank. I have drawn a chair to the wall, and am preparing to mount it, when I become aware of the fact that Mrs. Maxman and the tailor are speaking of me in the adjoining room.

"Well," says the tailor, "have you decided what to do with little Sammy?"

"Oh, the best place for him is the orphing asylum," replies Mrs. Maxman. "There he'll be took proper care of an' have a home."

"Yes, I s'pose so; but it's hard on the little feller, after having such a good mother."

"Sure it's hard," assents Mrs. Maxman, "but we're all poor people an' can hardly s'port our own, else I'd take 'im meself, the poor little orphing!"

"Have ye seen any of the directors of the asylum about w'ether they'll take him?"

"I've spoke half a hour ago over the 'phone to the president whom I know persinal, an' he says he'll lemme know to-night."

"I hope he gets in."

"So do I."

The little silver coin drops from my hand to the floor. I stand stark and silent as though turned to stone. And in my heart terror suddenly assumes full sway.

I do not know the meaning of the word "orphan"; but I know what an asylum is; and my heart sinks within me as the import of the conversation which I have overheard suddenly overwhelms me.

Asylum. They would send me to an asylum!

I have seen the long brick building (the "crazy house" we boys call it) on South Orange Avenue, where the

insane are housed; I have seen its barred windows whence none may escape; I have watched the forms at the windows and the hands grasping the iron grating which they could not move; I have beheld all this with awe and fear, and now that my mother is dead they would consign me, a little boy, to this house of madness where dwell those who could crush me in their maniacal frenzy, and could tear the heart from my quivering body.

They would send me to the asylum, to the "crazy house," because my mother is no longer here to protect me, and I am helpless. If ever a child felt mortal terror, I felt it as I stood tense, erect, frozen with fear, in that little bedroom, with the noonday sun shining in upon me, but my heart enveloped in darkness.

Had I but spoken then and there, how different my life would have been! Had I but sought an explanation from the two kind souls who evinced such an interest in my future welfare, how changed my existence would have been!

But I do not speak. I cannot speak. I am dumb with terror. I stand there in silence, too frightened to move, overcome by the horror of the thoughts which surge through my brain.

After a while I begin to cry, and Mrs. Maxman hears me, and hastens to my side, and takes me in her arms, and carries me into the kitchen.

"What's the matter, Sammy?" queries the little tailor.

"Don't ask him no questions," says Mrs. Maxman, softly and sympathetically. "We all know wot's the matter, an' the poor child feels awful bad. He's got sich a warm heart, the poor dear, an' every minit it strikes 'im. Now, Sammy," she adds, addressing me, "yer got to eat a nice, good dinner an' ye'll feel better."

But I cannot swallow my dinner. I see before me the



barred windows, and the frenzied faces peering forth, and the red brick façade of the "crazy house"; and, with this sight before me, I cannot swallow the food upon the table, but can only weep.

"You're tired, ye little dear!" says Mrs. Maxman, after vainly endeavouring to persuade me to eat. "Let me put ye to bed, an' go to sleep."

She carries me back to the bedroom, and I cuddle up in the bed, glad to be alone, and after a time I cry myself to sleep.

When I awake I find Becky bustling about, and relieving her handbag of a load of bananas, apples and pears.

"They're for you," she says with a chuckle as I sit up in bed. "Don't give none to Her outside."

The Her referred to is Mrs. Maxman. Becky is not fond of Mrs. Maxman because, as the little woman informs me, "She acts like as if She was the boss here, and it's me that's paying the rent. I don't like Her. I never did like Her. Not since I seen Her for the first time yesterday. She acts like as She was your mother — an' She not even paying rent here!" This with a sniff of contempt, indicative of lacerated feelings and subdued wrath. "I says to Her, I says: 'He (evidently referring to me) ain't yourn.' She says to me, She says: 'I only wish he was.' Oh, but She's a bad one, She is. You know who She reminds me of? Reisenberg."

She has emptied her handbag, and now proceeds to pile the fruit upon the bed slip in front of me.

"You look as though you was crying," she says suddenly. "What's the matter?"

At the words, my eyes fill again; and the banana which I am masticating loses its savor.

"What's the matter?"

I do not answer immediately but, vaguely recognising

the fact that the alternative of bananas or tears is inexorably presented to me, I strive manfully to repress my emotion until the last vestige of the luscious fruit shall have disappeared.

"Was you crying?" she asks me, with genuine concern in her voice.

I nod my head, and take another bite at the fast disappearing fruit.

"Was it Her?"

Recognising in the pronoun the individual referred to, I again nod my head.

"Well, she's out now, thank the Lord! and won't be back till night, so we can talk. What's she done?"

I do not answer immediately, being engaged in the mastication of the last vestige of the banana; but, coincident with the disappearance of the fruit, my repressed emotion breaks forth, and I weep aloud.

"Tell me about Her," pleads Becky, seating herself at the foot of the bed, and settling herself as though the better to enjoy an anticipated treat. "Tell me about Her and what she done."

"Dey want to take me away," I sob.

"Where to?"

"To de crazy house."

"The crazy-house?" Becky slides off the bed in sudden excitement, and jumps to her feet. "Oh, ain't that funny?" she says, with a look of the most intense interest and enjoyment upon her countenance; "they wanted to take me once to the same place! Now what do you think of that?"

I am too miserable to do any thinking or any speaking; but the little woman evidently ponders deeply, for she resumes her seat at the foot of the bed, and gazes at me fixedly for fully a minute before again addressing me.

"I wouldn't go if I was you," she suddenly announces with decision.

"I don't want to go to de crazy-house," I sob.

"I wouldn't go if I was you," she reiterates. And then she adds, in triumphant tones: "I'd run away!"

Until this moment, the possibility of escape from the fate to which Mrs. Maxman and the tailor would consign me had not entered my mind. Now, however, a little ray of hope penetrates my heart and subdues my sobs.

"I'd run away!" repeats the little woman with increased emphasis as she notes the effect which her utterance has upon me.

"But where?"

"Oh, anywhere. New York — Paris — Hackensack — Berlin — Hoboken — anywhere, so long as you run away." She names the various places in such a light and easy manner, and with such a little sweep of the hand over her shoulder, as to create the impression that they are located somewhere in our backyard, or, at furthest, in the yard next door.

"Was you efer dere?" I query, with just the slightest misgivings at her airy manner.

"Oh, Lor' bless you, I've been much further. I've been to Coney Island a dozen times."

My misgivings vanish at the implied assurance as to the accessibility of the places mentioned by her; and so soothing is the effect produced by her words, that I evince a revival of interest in the fruit before me, and tentatively test a pear, with satisfying results.

"Oh, yes," says Becky, airily. "It's easy enough to run away. You won't have any trouble at all. All that you need is plenty of apples an' bananas an' pears. But," she adds warningly, "look out for Reisenberg. Him an' Her (with a shake of her head toward the kitchen) is the



two that you're to look out for. He'll — he'll —" in a deep voice which she endeavours to render ferocious and terrifying — "he'll bite your head off!"

"Can't I eat dem pears first?" I query, fearful lest I be required to depart before completing my appetising repast.

"Sure. You won't go till to-morrow. In the morning. Before the others wake up. Reisenberg won't know. An' She won't know. Nobody'll know. Won't that be fun?"

She clasps her hands and laughs; and I laugh too; and we both feel that we are planning a great joke; and neither of us dreams of consequences. And thus airily, with laugh and jest, lightly and thoughtlessly (as is so often done in this world) we plan the deed which is to wreck my life.

Lightly and thoughtlessly, as is so often done in this world. For in this lies the tragic irony of fate: that bubbles (tiny, iridescent bubbles) so light of body to be almost weightless, are sent forth in our moments of play, with jest and laughter, and return to us heavy, and dark, and monstrous, and menacing, to affright us and to crush our hearts beneath their weight. Words lightly spoken, deeds lightly done — and the world grows changed.

So the queer little woman and I laugh together, and lay our plans, and prepare for my flight. She wraps up my newly washed undergarments (there are not many of them) in heavy paper, and I fill my pockets with marbles, and a top, and a dozen picture cards representing the exploits of divers noted pugilists who have won the admiration of the youths of this land. Thus equipped, and conscious of the fact that thirty-four cents are lying in my little savings-bank ready to be transferred to my pocket in the morning, I am prepared to brave the vicissitudes of fortune with a light heart.

In the evening Mrs. Maxman returns, and at a later hour the little tailor turns up at the house, and I hear him inquire, in a low voice: "Did you see the president?" and she answers: "Yes, it's all right. They'll take 'im. But I won't mention et to 'im till after the fun'ral." And I say not a word, but look forward expectantly to the morrow.

At nine o'clock Mrs. Maxman and the tailor take their departure, and shortly thereafter I prepare for bed. I sleep in the little woman's room to-night; and for an hour we discuss with great zest the step which I purpose to take in the morning.

Now, after many years, as I review the plans which we laid that night, I am impressed by our childish disregard of consequences, and our childish enjoyment of the adventure involved in my contemplated act. For we both had the minds of children — she as well as I — and she was no more fitted to advise me than were the children with whom I played in the streets. But this I did not realise until it was too late.

I know that we laughed a great deal, and that we discussed everything except the future, and that we both felt that this was the one thing that it was unnecessary to discuss, "for," as Becky remarked, "that'll take care of itself, an' it's no use talking of what you don't know anything about."

So we ignore that which matters most, and discuss at great length those things which matter least, and picture the mortification of Mrs. Maxman upon learning of my flight, and the disappointed countenance of the president of the "crazy-house," and I feel myself quite a man and a hero.

But I do not feel quite so manly or so heroic when, after a restless night, I am aroused at daybreak by the little

woman and told to get up and get ready. I peer out of my bedroom window, and see the grey dawn peering in, and a dark sky heavy with clouds; and, at the sight, my heart sinks within me. The glamour of my adventure has departed, and, with it, my elation of spirits; and I yearn to rest once more in the warm arms of her who lies dead and silent in the adjoining room, and to cling to her for protection. For I suddenly realise that I am only a little boy, and that I am afraid to venture forth without her; and, to Becky's dismay, I weep that I want my mamma, and I won't go away without her, and I want her — I want my mamma — now — right away — now!

So greatly is the little woman perturbed at this outburst that she can only shake her head and murmur in dismay: "Now ain't that mean! Ain't that the meanest!" as though I were guilty of incredible ingratitude, and were set upon disappointing her fondest hopes. But, after a few moments, she draws a dollar bill from the pocket of her skirt and waves it before my eyes, and tells me that it's mine, an' look all the candy I can buy for it — an' pears — an' bananas — an' apples — an' she bets I won't cry now. And, sure enough, the allurements of candy and fruit in unlimited quantities is potent to soothe me, and to deaden the pain and the sense of loneliness which somehow refuse to wholly depart.

We eat breakfast together in the kitchen; and my companion draws such alluring pictures of the wonderful sights that I shall see, and the fun to be found in travelling through the land and seeing all the games, and toys, and pictures, displayed in the stores of big cities, and she appears to derive such keen pleasure from her participation in my escape from the wretches who would incarcerate me in an asylum, that I grow quite light-hearted and cheerful, and feel that I am about to embark upon a glorious



adventure in a golden boat, upon a golden sea, beneath a golden sky.

After breakfast I dress myself in my best suit of clothes (hitherto reserved for Sabbaths and holidays) and polish my shoes until they look quite new. I suggest that it might be well for me to take my old clothes along, as I might require them at some time, but Becky opposes the suggestion as impracticable.

"The new ones look much nicer," she says; "an' when a man goes out into the world all he's got to do is to look nice, an' then his fortune's made."

So, attired in my best suit of clothes, carrying in my hands nothing but a bundle containing my underclothing, yet feeling myself rich in the possession of a dollar bill and thirty-four cents secreted in the pocket of my trousers, Becky and I silently and cautiously descend the stairs, fearful lest we be heard by Mr. and Mrs. Kapper, who are asleep in the attic. But we disturb no one, and no one hears us as we cautiously open the front door and step out upon the stoop.

I put my hand in my pocket to satisfy myself that my money is still there, and then it strikes me with appalling force that the money occupies very little space indeed — so little that my heart sinks, and I ask the little woman whether she won't please change my riches into pennies — a whole lot of them, I urge her earnestly — as many as she's got.

"Why?" she queries, in surprise.

"'Cause I likes 'em better," I answer; and perhaps there is a look in my face which silences further inquiry, for, without another word, she re-enters the house, and returns shortly with a whole handful of pennies which she gives me in exchange for the money in my pocket. And now, feeling my pocket heavy with copper, I am assured that untold

wealth is mine, and that my funds will now suffice to carry me not only out into the world, but also through it.

"Don't spend it all on apples," Becky instructs me; and then she adds: "Spend some of it on bananas an' pears, too. They're just as good."

Now that I am about to go I feel strangely reluctant to leave the house which has sheltered my mother and myself for several years. I take my companion's hand in mine, and clasp it tightly, and gaze about me fearfully.

"Now you can go," she says smilingly. "Gimme a kiss."

I kiss her, and she pats my shoulders.

"Good-bye," she says, beaming upon me. "Have a good time!"

"Good-bye," I murmur, with trembling lips.

I descend the front steps, then pause upon the sidewalk, and gaze up at her wistfully.

"W'ere'll I go?" I inquire faintly.

"Oh, anywhere," she promptly returns. "Just walk straight on till you come to London. An' by-an'-bye you'll get to New York, an' Paris, and Hoboken, an'— Oh, you'll have lots o' fun, you will. I'd go with you myself, but"—gazing carefully up and down the street to assure herself that no one is near—"Reisenberg'd catch me an' lock me up. Oh, he's a bad man. Don't let him catch you. He'll—he'll—he'll bite your head off."

And thus, with her voice of warning ringing in my ears, I take leave of her and begin my journey. Once I turn to take a last look at the house, and, from the second story window, behold a little head protruding (she must have rushed up the stairs immediately after my departure) and two little hands waving a frantic farewell, and the little head bobbing up and down as though it were bent upon

wrenching itself free from her body and shooting after me like a bullet from a pistol.

But the face that was wont to watch for my home-coming from school, and the eyes that loved to watch me at my play, and the hands that were ever ready to caress me tenderly — these are absent from the window, and these I shall see no more.

And so I leave behind me the quiet years of my childhood, and go forth to meet the cold and merciless Years To Come.





**BOOK II**  
**WITH BEGGARS AND DERELICTS**





## CHAPTER I

WHEREIN I MEET THE DEAF AND DUMB MAN, AND THE  
BLIND MAN, AND BECOME THE LATTER'S COMPANION

The morning is raw and chilly, and the streets are strangely silent at this early hour. The houses stare down coldly upon me, and their closed shutters impart to them an air of secrecy, and seclusion, as though they resent the curious glances which I cast upon them, and bid me begone, nor tarry in their sight. A ruddy milkman stops his wagon in front of one of the houses and sings out lustily: "Mee-ee-eelk!" And soon the front door is unlocked, and a frowsy-headed girl, with unwashed face and unbuttoned shoes, appears in the doorway, draws her wrapper tightly about her, and says, as she hands her pitcher to the milkman: "Ain't it cold?"

It *is* cold, though the autumn is not yet far advanced. The sun is lazy this morning, and has not yet risen; and the few people whom I encounter upon the street seem lazy also. Many of them stare at me curiously; and, in their eyes, I read a query which repeats itself until I can almost hear them say: "What are you doing up so early, eh? What are you doing up so early, eh?"

Soon the milkmen whom I meet grow curious, too; and the girls who unlock the front doors put the same query to me, and even the windows which open their shutters and begin to blink as the lazy sun peeps from behind a cloud and concludes that it is time to rise—even the windows, blinking as the sun strikes them, seem to greet me with the same query: "What-are-you-doing-up-so-early-eh?"

But the streets do not long remain half deserted, for soon the army of the Employed is on the march, with clay pipe and dinner pail; and the tramp of their feet resounds upon the stone walks; and next the shops open, and the store-keepers prepare to display their wares, and shrill factory whistles call men and women to their daily labour: and the world is again at work.

I saunter slowly along the streets, gazing into the windows which display toys or confectionery, and, feeling my wealth itching me, I invest three cents in candies of divers colors, whereon I feast royally. At this juncture a battle royal between a yellow dog and a black dog (pedigrees unknown) absorbs my attention, and leads me to a realisation of the joys of living, and when this battle is followed by a fistic encounter between the youthful owners of the respective canines, I feel that my cup of happiness is filled to overflowing, and I forthwith seat myself upon the curb to enjoy the encounter and to partake of a succulent lollipop.

After a time I resume my stroll, and find myself sauntering aimlessly along Broad Street, gazing into the big shop windows, and paying no heed to the flight of time until a sensation of hunger reminds me that it will soon be noon.

I purchase some bananas and apples at a fruit stand, and slowly wend my way along Broad Street until I arrive at Bridge. Here I pause to scrutinise a poor deaf and dumb man who vainly appeals for aid from the passing throng, although the placard upon his breast is prominent enough to attract my attention immediately.

#### Pitty the DEAF AND DUM

So reads the inscription which he bears. I join another youth who stands before him; and we watch him as he

vainly petitions the passers-by. His hair is unkempt, and there is a stubby beard upon his face. It is a lean, sallow face, very unprepossessing, and very dirty; and his eyes are small and bleary, but his nose is long and quite red, as though the frost had nipped it and tinted it.

I feel so sorry for the poor man as I note how unresponsive are the people who hurry past without a glance at the pitiful legend which he bears, that I put my hand in my pocket and draw forth a cent. Great is the astonishment of the youth beside me at this display of generosity and wealth, but, ere I can deposit the copper in the tin cup which the unfortunate man extends to me as he notes my action, the youth at my side mutters warningly:

"Cheese et! He's a fake. He ain' deaf an' dumb."

"De hell I ain't!" retorts the Deaf and Dumb Man wrathfully.

"Diden' I tell ye?" says the boy, addressing me triumphantly.

"Git out o' here, ye damn liar," shouts the Deaf and Dumb Man, as he aims a vicious kick at the boy; but the latter scurries away, shouting "Fake! Fake! Fake!" in taunting accents, to the intense annoyance of the red-nosed man.

He remains mute while some ladies approach, and, when one of them drops a nickel in his cup, he bows his head gratefully; but, when he observes that no one is near, he turns to me and says, in pathetic accents:

"Oh dem bad kids! dem bad kids! An' you putty near wuz good to a pore deaf an' dumb guy wot can't speak nor hear all day except a few minutes like dis. An' de bad kid druv ye away. O me pore mudder wot's dead, an' fadder wot's dead, an' if yez don' gimme a nickel I'll break yer neck, ye son of a gun!"

The change in his voice from piteous appeal to a growl-



ing threat is so sudden and unexpected that I hastily draw forth half a dozen pennies and drop them into his cup. I am too frightened to remain near him any longer, but hurry away in some alarm lest he pursue me. But he does not pursue me; and gradually my fears subside, and my interest in my surroundings is renewed, and, by the time that I reach the bridge over the Passaic, I am sufficiently interested in the passing show to lean lazily against the parapet and watch the boats at anchor in the river beneath me.

I tire of this after an hour, and pursue my way across the bridge. Arriving on the other side in the town of Harrison, I am surprised to find another beggar stationed on the sidewalk; but this beggar is blind and helpless, and requires a cane to enable him to feel his way. He has a jovial countenance, healthy and ruddy, especially about the nose. His hair is streaked with grey, and his beard is almost white, imparting a patriarchal expression to his countenance, and yet his face is youthful and unwrinkled and, notwithstanding his grey hairs, his age does not appear to be above forty-five. I cannot see the colour of his eyes, for they are almost closed because of his infirmity; but he seems well-fed and cheerful, as though undaunted by adversity.

Having my experience with the other beggar fresh in my mind, I am about to hurry past, when I hear him whine piteously: "O, help de blind wot can't see! Help de pore blind man!" Fearing to ignore the appeal, I put my hand in my pocket, and am about to draw forth a cent, when I perceive that the appeal is not addressed to me, but to a low-browed young man who is approaching, puffing vigorously at a cigarette.

"Go chase yerself!" says the young man, and passes on.

I am about to pass on also, but the face of the blind man



grows so pained and sad at the heartlessness of the young man, that I am moved by pity to drop my penny in his cup.

"T'ank ye! T'ank ye!" he exclaims. "Oh wot a good kid! wot a nice kid! Dat's de kind o' kid I like. Oh wot a good kid!"

He opens his eyes and stares at me as though he can almost see me with his sightless orbs.

I draw closer to him, and permit him to examine the texture of my coat.

"Dat's my *Shabbos* (Sabbath) suit," I explain, with some pride, and he nods his head approvingly, and assures me that it's all right. But his fingers have gradually worked themselves down to the pocket of my trousers; and "Wot's dat?" he says in surprise, "ye'd almos' t'ink dere's money in dat pocket, dough o' course et can't be dat."

"Oh, yes, et is," I hasten to assure him, proudly. "I got a lot o' money. More'n a dollar. An' et's all mine."

"Now ain't dat fine!" he cries in admiration and delight. "No one'd t'ink ye wuz so rich. I wouldn't 'a' t'ought et myself if ye hadn' tole me, s'elp me Gawd! I t'ought on'y road-kids is got so much dough."

"Wot's road-kids?" I query, with some show of interest.

"Don' ye know wot road-kids is?" he says, incredulously. "Not know wot road-kids is? Ye don' mean to tell me ye don' know wot road-kids is!" ("O, pity de blind!") This appeal is addressed to a young lady who passes by.)

"W'y," he says laughingly, "road-kids is kids wot hits de road. Dat's de life for a young guy, dat is. Et's out in de air fer his — an' ridin' in de cars — an' no woikin' in fact'ries till yez drop. Not fer him — O no — no

woik fer de 'Bo (hobo). Et's a easy life — a cinch — a lead pipe cinch — an' yer t'ree meals a day, an' w'en yez gits tired dere's de cars waitin' fer yez."

I cannot follow him very readily. He employs so many strange phrases in his conversation, and I am so wholly unfamiliar with the subject on which he dilates, that his explanation leaves me as perplexed as ever, though with curiosity stimulated by his utterance.

"Wot kind o' cars is waitin' fer 'im?"

"Wot kind? Railroad cars — side door Pullman's (box cars) — nices' cars ye kin t'ink of. An' all de ridin' ye gits free — seein' de country — all oveh de land — an' France an' Germany, an' all oveh Europe. (Me fahder's lame: me mudder's lame — 'Scuse me: I mean blind. Oh, t'ank ye miss.) An' all de fun ye has wit'out payin' and wit'out woikin'. Cheese et! Dere comes a bull (policeman)."

He gazes down the street in some alarm, and I follow his gaze, but search in vain for any bovine. I see only a few pedestrians and a policeman who is leisurely drawing near; hence I attribute his mistake to his defective vision, though I have begun to entertain grave doubts as to whether there is a substantial basis for his appeals to the public. Nor are these doubts dispelled when I observe the ease with which he shuffles over the sidewalk and turns the corner of the street, adjuring me in the meantime to walk beside him "cause a blind guy's got to hev some one to help 'im, an' de bull's hostile (unfriendly)."

After having traversed several blocks, and having made several turns, we find ourselves back on the street whence we had fled, but several blocks distant from the scene of the Blind Man's former operations. His trepidation has vanished, and he grins at me, and winks one of his eyes, as he takes his stand at the street corner.

"Oh, dat wuz a horstile bull," he informs me. ("Me fahder's blind: me mudder's got sore eyes: an' I can't see. O pity de blind! — Yes, sir, I wuz born dat way. So wuz me fahder. An' me brudder'll be dat way too, putty soon. Oh, t'ank ye! T'ank ye!) Yes, dat wuz a horstile bull. He jugged (imprisoned) me wonst, an' I got t'ree mont's in de cooler (dark cell). Wot's yer name?"

"Sammy Gordin."

"W'y don' yez hang on to me? Be me kid: be me prushun (adopted tramp child): an' I'll be yer jocker (tramp foster parent)."

I shrink back. Although I am wholly unfamiliar with the tramp's argot, yet the words "be me kid," and "hang on to me" bear sufficient similarity to the language of the streets as acquired by the average boy to enable me to detect therein an invitation from which I instinctively recoil.

"Ef yez goes wit' me yez'll git all de ridin' ye wan's. An' see de country — Nort' an' Sout' an' East an' West. An' no woik. An' O, de fun! — de fun fer a ole bloke like me, an' a young guy like you. An' eatin'? — w'y, yer belly'll jes' bust wit' good t'ings. Wot d' ye like to eat? D' ye like chicken?"

I nod my head, inspired by a recollection of a meal whereof I had partaken on *Rosh Hashanah* (New Year) three years ago.

"An' wot else?"

"Candy."

"Sure. And wot else?"

"Bananas, an' pears an' — an' —"

"Pie?"

"— An' pie, an' apples, an' —"

"Sure," he exclaims, with a jolly laugh, slapping me upon the shoulder, and nodding his head vigorously.

“Ye’ll git et all — any’ting ye wan’s — ef ye hits de road wit’ me. Wot d’ ye say? Is it a go?”

I hesitate, allured by his words, and yet in doubt. But he pats me upon the shoulder good naturedly, and assures me that “we two ’ill beat all de ’Boes (tramps) in creation ef we hangs together,” and finally I am persuaded to nod my consent.

He is very much elated at my acquiescence, and immediately conducts me to a candy-store to celebrate our alliance in a manner most acceptable to me.

“Now pick out anything ye likes,” he says, pointing to the confectionery displayed in the show-window, “an’ et’s yourn.”

I glue my face to the glass, and, after carefully scrutinising the contents of the window, select the sweets which I desire to acquire. We enter the store. The Blind Man goes first, and this proves extremely unfortunate, for, although he can readily make his way through the streets without assistance, he is utterly lost when he attempts to enter the store. Bereft of his sight, he fails to observe a chair which stands near the door, and, as a consequence, stumbles over it, and falls, with a heavy thud, to the floor.

A little, pink-cheeked woman rushes from behind the counter to the Blind Man’s assistance.

“Oh, me pore eyes!” he moans, striving to raise himself from the floor. “Oh, me pore, blind eyes! Oh, ef I wuz on’y dead an’ done for!”

“Oh, you poor man!” exclaims the woman sympathetically, as she assists him to rise. “I’m so sorry.”

“Et’s dem blind eyes o’ mine, mum, dat’s killin’ me,” he says with a sigh. “But wot’s one goin’ te do? I wuz born so, an’ I’ll die so, like me pore fahder, an’ dere’s nothin’ te do but to make de best of et. Come here, me son” — this is to me — “an’ pick out de candies ye wan’s,



an' t'ank yer lucky stars ye ain' blind like yer pore fahder an' gran'fahder."

The pink-cheeked woman waits upon me, and I choose the sweets which appeal to me, with discriminating care.

"He's a good boy," says the Blind Man, patting my cheeks, "an' I dunno wot I'd do without 'im. Et's a good son he is, mum, an' I t'ank de Lore he's sich a good chile to his blind fahder; an' I'm glad w'en I got a couple o' pennies left to git 'im a piece o' candy or two."

"I guess you're a pretty good father to him or he wouldn't be such a good son," says the woman, smiling upon me.

"No mum," says the Blind Man, deprecatingly; "not de kind o' fahder he ought to have — wot wit' me bein' blind an' pore. But dere's alluz a penny in me pocket fer little Jack — alluz a penny or two. How much did ye say et wuz?"

She had not said anything about the price, but had been engaged in serving me with numerous confections dear to a child's heart. Now that my companion broaches the subject of cost, she hesitates a moment, her kind heart evidently moved by pity for the unfortunate father.

"Well," she says slowly, "it's really eight cents, but suppose we call it five."

"No, no, mum," says the Blind Man proudly, "eight cen's et is, an' not five; an' ef et's eight et's not a cent less. I may be pore, mum, but I got a little pride left in me, an' so long's I got a cent in me pockets I pays me debts. Here," he adds, fumbling in the right pocket of his trousers — "here's yer eight —"

He stops suddenly, and over his face there sweeps an expression of stupefaction, followed by one of utter helplessness and woe. So pitiful is his look of bewilderment that the woman asks him whether there is anything wrong.

"W'y — w'y," he stammers, drawing a single copper cent from his pocket, "et's — et's — a mistake. I had et — I mus' have et — I had t'irty cen's in dis pocket. Et's here — et mus' be here. Et can't be lost. Et's — et's —" his voice ends in a shrill wail — "dere's a hole in me pocket! Dere's a hole in me pocket, an' me money's gone!"

With trembling hands he exhibits the lining of his pocket, and, sure enough, there is a hole therein to account for the disappearance of his money. He is inconsolable. He tears his hair, and bemoans his fate, and strokes my head with trembling hands, and mutters: "Pore boy! Pore boy! Give 'er back yer candy fo' yer pore dad ain' got no money left to buy et. Give et to de lady, me son. Give et —"

"O, that's all right," the kind hearted woman assures him. "I don't want it back. Let him keep it. It's all right."

"Never, mum!" cries the Blind Man. "Et 'd be robbin' ye — dat's wot I calls et — an' I'm too hones' te —"

"Just let the boy keep it. I won't take it back — I won't accept it. No.— Here, little boy, you just keep it and eat it."

To my dismay, the Blind Man had insisted upon returning the coveted confections to the woman. Now that she insists upon their retention by me I grasp them eagerly and thankfully. But my companion is loath to yield.

"O, mum," he pursues, with trembling voice; "ye means well, but ye'll break de pore kid's heart wit' yer kindness. Wit' all our car-fare gone, an' on'y a penny in his pore dad's pocket, d'ye t'ink he kin eat in peace de candy dat is giv to him? Neveh, mum! — neveh! —"

"Oh, yes, I kin," I pipe forth, fearful lest I be deprived of the sweets, and anxious to voice a remonstrance to the

suggestion that the gift be not acceptable to me. "I kin eat it. I like candy."

"Of course he can have it," insists the kind woman. "And I won't let him walk, either, when he might just as well ride. Here, mister, take this car-fare for your boy and yourself.— Oh, now don't refuse. You don't want to tire out the dear little child.— Here. Take it — Now don't refuse."

"For little Jack's sake, an' de blisters on his feet from walkin'. Ef et wuzen' fer him I'd neveh take a cent — neveh, mum! But te-morrer mornin' I'll pay et back. T'ank yez. Oh, t'ank yez. Take me hand, me son, an' lead me out o' dis store dat I don' fall."

I obey him, and lead him forth. Reaching the sidewalk he turns upon me a grinning face, and winks. After proceeding a short distance he favours me with another wink, releases my hand, and slaps me upon the shoulder.

"Ye're all right, kid. Et 's us kin given 'em de song and dance (begging tale), can't we?"

I nod my head, for I am too confused to make audible reply. Unaccustomed as I have been to low practices, falsehood and deception, the scene in which I have been an innocent participant fairly bewilders me.

"Ye're all right, kid," repeats my companion, laughing at me approvingly, "an' et 's a blowed-in-de-glass stiff (professional) ye'll be ef ye keeps on like dat."

Though a large part of his language is unintelligible to me, my boyish vanity is nevertheless flattered by the obvious compliment implied in his manner and in his obscure utterances. It is evident that I have unconsciously demonstrated a capacity for certain work, and the gratification which a child invariably feels upon being the recipient of compliments from an adult expands my breast with a certain degree of pride.



"Et's pals we'll be, won' we?" he queries, and I dutifully nod my head. "An' w'en ye's a real blowed-in-deglass stiff we'll divvy up, won' we?" Another nod from me. "But o' course ye's too young to git a divvy now. Ye's got to learn foist, like all de prushuns, an' o' course ye don' t'ink yez kin learn wit'out payin' fer et — now, does ye?"

My heart sinks within me. I really had begun to cherish the hope that my companion would take me on a pleasure trip through the world without exacting any compensation from me; but it is now obvious that I have been mistaken as to his intentions, and I suddenly am confronted by the thought that perhaps, after all, the pennies in my trousers pockets are insufficient to pay my way through the world which looms before me.

"Now ye knows dat ye can't expec' nobody te learn ye nahtin' if ye don' pays fer et," the Blind Man reiterates, much to my discomfiture. "Ye knows dat, don' che?"

I nod feebly.

"An' now de question is, Kin yez pay fer et?"

"I ain' got no money 'ceptin' wot I got in me pocket," I murmur plaintively.

"Well, maybe dat's enough. Lemme look at et."

I draw my money from my pocket and drop it into his hat. We have halted in front of a vacant lot, and now, upon the Blind Man's suggestion, we seat ourselves upon a rock which lies close to the sidewalk, and my companion counts my money.

"Et ain' much," he says, when I have emptied my pockets and he has counted my money — "et ain' much fer givin' a young prushun a good eddication." Then, observing the look of disappointment upon my countenance, he adds: "But I kinder likes yer mug, an' seein' as yez



insist on me takin' the money, dough et ain' much more'n a ball (dollar), w'y, I'll do et, seein' et's you."

He says this with such an air of condescension, and pockets my money with such evident reluctance, that I hasten to thank him for his kindness in accepting my funds, and to assure him that I shall try to satisfy him in all things, which assurance he is good enough to accept in a kindly spirit of forbearance.

"Now," he says, as we pursue our way, "I guess I mooched (begged) enough to-day. Come wit' me an' I'll show ye our hang-out."

Hand in hand we walk along. I do not ask myself whether I acted wisely in parting with my last penny. I only know that I am no longer alone, that I have found a companion and protector, and that I am prepared to follow him wherever he may lead.

## CHAPTER II

### WHEREIN I AM INTRODUCED TO HOBOLAND, AND CAROUSE WITH A THRONG OF VAGRANTS

As we proceed, the houses grow sparser and more isolated, and from the yards gaunt dogs bark at us viciously, leaping upon the tottering palings of the rickety fences, and snarling as we pass. Little children upon the streets pause in their play to gaze wonderingly at the Blind Man, and one of them calls after him: "W'ere 'd ye hook dat coat? W'ere 'd ye hook dat coat?" whereat my companion grows very wrathful, and grasps a stone in his hand, thereby putting the offender promptly to flight. But a moment later, the head of the young rogue peers forth from the shelter of the second-story window to renew the query in shrill accents, and to add: "W'ere 'd ye hook yer hat? W'ere 'd ye hook yer shoes? W'ere 'd ye hook yer pants? W'ere 'd ye hook yer glass eyes?"

The houses straggle past us, and the fences totter as they pass from our view, and soon the streets grow tired of running into vacant lots and garbage dumps, and, in despair, stop running altogether. But, where the streets cease to run, the garbage heaps uprear their ashen heads, and flutter aloft the papers which cling to their soiled crowns. Ashes and garbage upon the beaten paths which trail across the arid lots, and ashes and garbage upon the sickly grasses which seek to shoot aloft amid the encompassing ruin. And from the meadows, the Great Salt Meadows, extending miles and miles beyond Newark to where they cut into Jersey City, and almost reach to the

feet of New York itself — from these meadows, broad and vast and desolate, comes a cold breeze hurtling over the land, and striking us as we enter upon the bleak and chilly domains of the Desolate Lands.

Now the homes of men are left behind us, and the chill winds bear no human voices to our ears. We no longer hear the barking of dogs, and the cries of children at play. Close at hand are the garbage heaps, and the brown soil, and the green grasses, and rusty tin cans littering the ground, and stained newspapers fluttering from the bushes which hold them so tightly that only a sharp wind can tear them loose and blow them away.

And the wind comes, strong, and sharp, and biting — over the meadows it comes babbling and whistling — and it tears the papers from the bushes, and sweeps them aloft in its arms, and scatters the garbage, and sends the ashes scurrying over the ground, and bends the grasses, and wrinkles the pools, and rolls the tin cans down the slopes, and over the stubble, and into the wrinkled jaws of the shiny pools.

Miles and miles of desolate swamp-lands and green meadow grasses — tall grasses, six feet, ten feet high, with crests waving gracefully in the wind, and roots imbedded in the black slime of stagnant pools. Mounds of brown soil showing here and there, and patches of yellow disclosed now and then; but around them, on all sides, wave the green grasses above the broad green plains.

Here and there a factory squats down upon the green carpet and smokes its pipe until the chimney grows quite black. And the toy locomotives which roll so smoothly over the tracks, they, too, smoke and smoke until the air grows dark with soot.

Somewhere on the other side of the meadows lies New York. Beyond the Hackensack River which cuts its way

through the bleak, deserted swamp-lands; beyond Jersey City which rears its smoky walls to check the marshalled forces of the green-capped hosts; on the other side of the restless Hudson, there, eight miles distant, lies the vast city where men hurl themselves into the vortex of the surging Sea of Life. But here, where we now walk, there is no Sea of Life, only desolate fenlands and black morasses which lick the roots of the growing weeds. A toy locomotive with its train of toy cars (how small it seems, viewed from a distance!) pursues its way toward the great metropolis, leaving a trail of smoke behind it, and to my ears there is faintly borne the muffled toot of the engine far away.

After a long walk, during which we surmount numerous mounds of garbage, and skirt stretches of moist soil covered with weeds, we approach a place where there is life. As we draw near I perceive a score of men gathered about a huge bonfire which is burning in the centre of an acre or so of firm, dry land, close to the railroad embankment — men with rough, villainous faces and unkempt hair, who gaze at me curiously as we join them. They are attired in cast-off clothing — for the most part in ill-fitting, threadbare garments, though some of them, more fortunate than the rest, wear clothes which have seen comparatively little wear, and their shoes (some in fair condition, some so broken that the bare toes of their owners peer forth) are covered with the mud of the swamps.

"Dis is our hang-out," says my companion; and then, as we draw close to the fire, he says to the group about it: "I got a prushun, an' I guess he's gittin' hungry. Ain't ye got no punk an' plaster (bread and butter) fer 'im?"

"Sure we got some," says a woman's voice; and then I perceive that one of the figures at the fire is a woman, and, as she turns round (for hitherto her back has been turned



toward me), I gaze into a face that was once pretty, but is so no longer. She appears to be about thirty years of age. Her features are quite regular, and her brown eyes are soft and pleasant, but her face is red and weather-beaten, and her dark hair is tangled and unkempt. She has hitherto been busy at the fire where a number of rusty kettles and a dozen tomato cans are steaming on the blazing fagots, but now she picks up from the ground a slice of bread (there are fully a score of rolls and slices of bread scattered promiscuously about) and hands it to me, bidding me "chew the grub," which I proceed to do voraciously, though I do not relish the company into which I have fallen.

I think she realises that the villainous countenances of some of the vagrants repel me and fill me with something akin to fear, for she bids me sit down beside her, and assures me that, though the blokes look a little rough, they're all right, an' no one's goin' to hurt me, an' I needen' be scared. Soothed by her words, and more so by her manner, my fears are soon allayed. I follow the example of the Blind Man (who, it seems, is not blind at all) and sprawl upon the ground before the fire, listening to the conversation of the vagrants, and enjoying the warmth of the blaze.

Soon other vagrants join us. They come tramping across the waste lands, singly and in groups, some smiling and some cursing, some with hoarse melodies and some with foul imprecations upon their lips, but all of them dirty, and ugly, and repulsive, as they come straggling in, and fling themselves before the fire.

Now, for the first time, I become acquainted with a new phase of life, and meet types of men hitherto unknown to me — vagabonds, tramps, hoboes (call them what you will) — fresh from the streets and the gutters and the sewers — natives of that strange subterranean region known as

Hoboland, whence few return to the light and air of the upper world again. For they who sink down into that gloomy abyss within which the Hobo wanders about, have left behind them the hopes and aspirations which inspire the world above them, and are bound unto the world of crime and vagabondage by chains which they may never break.

Over the meadows they come tramping — blind men whose eyesight grows keen as they approach the hang-out; lame men who cease to limp as the bonfire comes into sight; men with bloody bandages about their wrists and arms, who untie the rags and throw them to the ground before the fire; deaf and dumb men whose hearing is restored, and who grow garrulous as they join their fellow hoboies at the rendezvous. And over the meadows, with his face lean and sallow, and his nose redder than ever, comes the Deaf and Dumb Man whom I had met this noon, and at his side limps a short, fat man on a wooden peg. The short, fat man has short brown whiskers on his cheeks, and a short, stubby nose in the middle of his face, and two innocent blue eyes which blink frequently as though it grieved them beyond measure to behold the wickedness of this world. And, as the two draw near, it is evident that they are not in a pleasant frame of mind, for their countenances are gloomy, and the language which they employ was never culled from a Sunday school reader nor from a kindergarten primer of the public schools.

"Wot's de matteh?" calls out the Blind Man cheerily. "Yez don' look ez dough de sun struck yez full in de phiz."

"Shut up!" snorts the Lame Man.

"Hold yer gab!" growls the Deaf and Dumb Man.

"Is ye got bugs in yer liver?" inquires the Blind Man solicitously, with a grin.

"Bugs be damned!" growls the Deaf and Dumb Man.

"Here I've been moochin' (begging) all day, an' fer wot? For wot?" he repeats, with rising indignation. "Fer toity cen's!—Toity cen's!" he cries, indignantly,—“toity cen's! An' me a pore deaf an' dumb man wot ought to be pitied an' helped. Look at dis sign! Look at et!” With a quick movement he tears it from his breast and flings it far away. “Te hell wit' Pitty de Deaf and Dum! Dat gag don' work no more. People is too selfish to pity de deaf an' dumb nowadays. Wot do dey care for a pore bloke wot's got to stand all day wit'out darin' te say a woid? Dey don' care a damn!”

“An' me,” begins the Lame Man, airing his discontent—“look at me! Beggin' all day, and fer on'y fo'ty cen's. Wot's fo'ty cen's te a blowed-in-de-glass stiff (a professional)? Luk at me,” he wails, limping up and down to exhibit his wooden peg. “Ain't I lame anough? Kin a man be lamer? Wouldnen' ye t'ink a wooden peg like dat 'd give people de fits wit' pity?”

“Ain' dat too bad!” murmurs the Blind Man sympathetically, with just the shadow of a smile upon his face. “Diden' no one take a fit w'en dey seen yez?”

“Take a fit?” wails the Lame Man. “I nearly took a fit meself waitin' fer some soft mush te drop a copper in me hat. Fo'ty cen's! Fo'ty cen's! Ain't dat anough te make a guy sick?”

“How much did you batter (beg) te-day?” inquires the Deaf and Dumb Man of my companion. “I bet yez wuz luckier dan me. Yez alwuz wuz a lucky bloke, anyhow, wit' dem w'ite w'iskers o' yourn.”

“Oh, I dunno,” drawls the Blind Man. “I guess I'm somet'in' of a blowed-in-de-glass stiff w'en et comes te moochin' (begging). How much did I batter? Well, I'll tell yez, since ye're askin'. I battered jes' t'ree sinkers (dollars).”



"T'ree sinkers!" howls the Deaf and Dumb Man, enviously.

"T'ree sinkers!" wails the Lame Man. "An' me fo'ty cen's!"

"Shet up!" snarls the former, turning upon the Lame Man. "Wot che kickin' about, anyhow? A man wit' a wooden leg dat wuz shot off in de war, o' in a steamboat explosion, kin alwuz batter more'n a bloke wot's on'y deaf an' dumb. W'y, I can't even tell 'em I'm deaf and dumb o' dey'll t'ink I'm a fake. W'y don' che gimme yer wooden leg an' I'll give ye me deaf-an'-dumb sign."

"I don' wan' to be deaf an' dumb," protests the Lame Man. "I wan's te be blind."

"An' I wan's te be lame," shouts the other. "Ain't I got ez much right te hev on'y one leg ez you have? Wot d'ye t'ink?" he continues, indignantly. "D'ye t'ink I wan's te stay deaf an' dumb all me life? If I do"—and here he shakes his fist in the Lame Man's face—"an' ye gits me hot, I won' speak anodder woid to ye 's long ez I live. An' don' yez fe'git it, neider."

"Wot t'ell d' I care!" growls the other.

"I'll make yez care," roars the Deaf and Dumb Man, throwing off his coat, and assuming a belligerent attitude, "I'll show yez —"

"Here! here!" says a deep, commanding voice, "stop that fooling!" and a man springs up from the ground and coolly steps between the two belligerents. He is a dark-skinned, handsome man of about thirty-five, with something dashing in his appearance which somehow distinguishes him from the crowd of ragamuffins about him. He has a small, black moustache, and piercing black eyes, and dark curly hair which clusters about his forehead. His nose is straight and regular, and his lips are straight and thin. I do not like his lips, though, at the time, I do not ask my-



self what there is about his appearance that attracts me, and what there is that repels me. But now, after many years, I conclude that there is something cold and cruel in the contour of those thin straight lips which repels me as much as his eyes attract and fascinate me. Large, flashing eyes, piercing eyes, eyes that seem to penetrate one as though they were seeking to read one's inmost thoughts. Eyes eloquent in their power to flash forth commands and secure obedience. Black eyes wherein the passions play like lightning in a midnight sky.

Most of the men have been laughing good-naturedly at the quarrel of the two disappointed beggars; but, at the sound of the dark man's voice, a sudden silence falls upon the group, and the Deaf and Dumb Man lowers his up-raised arms, and turns sheepishly toward the man who has addressed him so imperiously.

"I don' like me spiel (line of business)," mutters the Deaf and Dumb Man. "Here I'm putty near shatin' on me uppers (wholly without funds). Eighteen cen's yesterday, an' toity te-day, an' ef I had his peg I'd pay 'im fer et; an' he don' want et anyhow."

"Pay me?" pipes the little, fat tramp derisively. "Wot'll ye pay me wit'? — A spool o' t'read or a papeh o' pins? Or maybe ye'll pay me wit' a beautiful stick o' lemon candy so's I kin suck me money out of et. Oh yes, I see yez payin' me —"

"Shut yer gab," growls the Deaf and Dumb Man wrathfully, "or I'll —"

"Now if you two will stop chewin' a rag (talking to no purpose) I'll say a word when you get through."

The words come from the dark man's lips calmly and coldly, and his countenance is like a mask, so devoid is it of interest or emotion. But there is something in the calm and chill tones which cools the hot blood of the two

vagrants and causes them to grow sheepish and apologetic.

"Now see here, Lanky Jack," he says, addressing the Deaf and Dumb Man, "if you want Fatty's peg you've got to pay for it. Understand?"

"Diden' I say —?"

"Never mind what you said. Now," turning to the Lame Man, "how much do you want for et?"

"Oh, I guess et's wort'—"

"Never mind what it's worth," he interrupts in quick, decisive tones. "How much do you ask for it?"

"I ought te git 'bout five sinkers anyhow," says the Lame Man, "an' den —"

"Jack'll give you three sinkers, and that 's all you're going to get." Then, turning to the Deaf and Dumb Man, he says cuttingly: "And you! If you don't batter those three sinkers inside of a week I'll brand you as a tomato-can-vag, an' that's where you'll belong."

Now, of all the various types of tramps, the lowest, as I subsequently learned, is the tomato-can vag. He it is who gathers his food from barrels of refuse upon the street, who empties cans which their owners have flung away, and craves the stale beer which he finds in discarded kegs in front of saloons. He sleeps in empty barrels, or in abandoned boxes, and considers himself fortunate if he can slink, unseen, into some dark cellar and there pass the night. For he is the pariah of the tramps — an object of contempt and hatred to every other hobo in the social scale above him — and with him none will associate save other outcasts fallen as low as he.

Though the Deaf and Dumb Man grows red with wrath at the insult offered him, he does not dare to resent the utterance of the speaker, for there is that in the dark man's voice and in the flash of his eyes which cows all opposition. So he murmurs sullenly that it's a cold day when he can't

mooch three sinkers in a week ; while the *Lame Man*, equally overawed, proceeds to remove the wooden peg, and to release his imprisoned leg, after which he stamps the earth for several minutes in an effort to restore proper circulation to the member whose activity he had curbed throughout the day.

"What's keeping Red Eyes so long?" inquires the dark man impatiently, turning to the woman who is still busy over the fire.

"I don' know," she murmurs, rising, and straining her eyes in the gathering dusk as she peers across the waste lands in the direction of the town.

"I'll bet he hasn't mooched (begged) a quarter to-day. I'll skin him alive if he don't bring some money in to-night."

His manner is so saturnine, and his words are so terrifying, that I draw closer to my companion, the *Blind Man*. He perceives that I am afraid, so he whispers in my ear that I musen' be a little fraid-cat: *Dandy Dan* won' eat me up, an' I needen' git scared.

But I am afraid of the dark man, *Dandy Dan*, nevertheless ; and the hand which I place in that of my companion trembles as he holds it. Nor are my fears allayed as the darkness gathers, and the firelight plays upon the forbidding countenances of the vagabonds about me.

As the gloom deepens, other tramps come wandering in until the group at the fire numbers fully thirty ; and last of all there comes a white-faced boy of twelve or thirteen, with red eyelids and watery eyes, and a sickly cast of countenance ; and my heart grows a little lighter, and I feel less lonesome, at the thought that perhaps I shall find a play-fellow even amid this motley throng of uncouth vagabonds. But there is naught of playfulness in his demeanor, and not a trace of care-free youth in his features, as he slinks in with hesitating steps and glances furtively about him.



God! what a look of fear upon that child's countenance! It haunts me now: it will ever haunt me.

A child's face, and yet not the face of a child. A boy's face, and yet so old, so heartbreakingly old. The face of a child who has never known the joys of childhood: the saddest spectacle in all the sad world.

There came a time when I beheld that look more frequently upon the faces of children — sometimes in homes where Poverty gnawed and gnawed at empty stomachs throughout the year, oftener in the gloomy haunts of Vice and Crime where children were born damned and never attained heaven until life was over — and sometimes ere I, too, had sunk far into the depths of this world's nether-world, a cry would be rung from me to assail the deaf ears of a heedless world, and this would be the cry which no one recognised, and no one heard:

“Behold, men, this human child! What sort of beast will ye make of him?”

Well, here is one of these children — this lad surnamed Red Eyes — and before him stands the Maker of the Beast-That-Is-To-Be. The child's eyes rove about until they encounter the eyes of Dandy Dan, and there they rest with such a look of fear in their depths as springs to the eyes of a man when he encounters a tiger in the jungle, and realises that he is weaponless, and that no help is near.

It is quite dark now; but the fire shines so brightly that it lights up the features of every person in the group; and, as the boy stands but two or three feet distant from me, I can see his features almost as distinctly as though it were daylight.

“Well,” says Dandy Dan, breaking the silence, “you don't come in any too early, do you? How much have you mooched?”



"I tried hard," falters the child, "but —"

"How much have you mooched?" His voice is so cold and measured that its frigidity seems to freeze the lad so that the latter cannot answer immediately for excess of terror.

"Well?" Again that cold, emotionless voice.

The boy's face is distorted as with a spasm as the answer breaks from him: "Nineteen cen's."

"Come here!" The boy shrinks back for just a moment; then, with those terror-stricken eyes fixed upon the dark man as though some hypnotic power wrings obedience from him despite himself, he slowly advances toward his tormentor. There is something gruesome in the manner in which he writhes rather than walks toward the dark man, as though, with every step, his body attempts to shrink back while, through sheer strength of will, he forces it forward. And thus he advances, and thus he draws near, to the evil spirit who awaits him with that mask-like impassivity.

Suddenly the arm of the man shoots out, and his fist lands with full force upon the child's face. The boy is lifted clean off his feet by the brutal blow, and drops to the ground half a dozen feet away.

"Get up!" commands Dandy Dan.

With a moan, the boy slowly raises himself. His nose is bleeding, and the blood is trickling down into his mouth.

"Come here!"

The child lurches forward a step, and then halts, moaning pitifully.

"Come here, I say!" The voice is as placid and emotionless as ever. He does not advance a step toward Red Eyes, but calmly waits for the latter to come within reach of that merciless fist. Again that writhing approach (though the distance is very short indeed), that conflict

between body and will, that shrinking back of the flesh from the inevitable assault, and again that cruel fist thrust forward, and the thud of its impact against the face of the child, and the body bounding backward and dropping to the earth where it lies motionless.

"Get up!" No trace of emotion, no mercy, no relenting, in those calm, even tones.

"Dan!" It is the woman who utters the cry. She rushes to his side, and places her left hand upon his shoulder, and pleads with him.

"Don' hit 'im again, Dan. He's knocked out. He's on'y a kid."

"Shut up!" answers Dan, with an oath.

"But he's on'y a kid. He didn' do nothin'. He's on'y a kid."

She puts her arms about the man's neck, but he shakes her off roughly, and flings her aside, and, for the first time, there are traces of hot anger in his voice as he curses her.

"Oh, Dan! please don' hoit 'im! Please —"

She gets no further in her speech. The cruel fist of the man strikes her full in the face, and she falls in a heap to the ground, where she lies weeping and moaning. She does not attempt to rise immediately, nor does she resume her pleading, for the lesson which she has learned through blows and indignities is one which so many women have learned through travail and suffering.

As the boy still seems unconscious, Dandy Dan turns surlily and resumes his seat before the fire. It is evident that he is held in fear by all that motley throng.

"Give us some scoff (food)," says Dan, resuming his cool, measured tones.

The woman, still sobbing, struggles to her feet, and distributes a dozen tomato cans filled with hot soup among

the men. When these have been emptied they are replenished and passed to others until all have partaken. It requires some persuasion on the part of my companion to induce me to drink, or to eat the portion of meat handed to me, for the scene which I have witnessed has unstrung me; but I finally join in the repast, though my appetite is gone. We take the meat in our fingers, for we have neither knives, nor forks, nor plates.

The boy raises himself to a sitting posture after a time, and partakes of the food which the woman offers him. His face is bruised, and bloody, and swollen, and he eats in silence.

"W're's de booze (drink)?" inquires a red-headed individual who (as I subsequently learn) is known as Red Mike. "Yez don' 'spec' to hev a sloppin' up (drinking-bout) wit'out a swag o' booze?"

"Et's comin' all right," replies a tramp with a mop of blond, tangled hair surmounting a blotched face that looks hideous in the light of the fire. He rises from the ground and, assisted by two other vagrants, rolls into view three kegs of beer which have been lying upon the ground, beyond the circle of light, covered by some bags.

Again the tomato-cans are filled; but this time with beer. The first keg is soon emptied, and, as the contents of the second keg diminish, the wayfarers grow hilarious, and sing popular melodies in hoarse voices, and recount tales of the road, and ghost stories (begging stories), and recite the lyrics and the epics of the tramp.

For the tramp has his lyrics, and ballads, and epics, wherein are set forth his trials and vicissitudes, and the exploits of renowned chieftains of the hobo world.

"Wot's his monica?" finally queries a low-browed ragamuffin, pointing to me.

"Newark Kid," promptly answers the Blind Man; and



thenceforth Samuel Gordin is no more, and the Newark Kid steps into his place, to fill the void left when that other vanishes from this earth.

"Take some booze, Kid," says Low Brow (I do not know his monica) with husky affability. I hesitate, but the blind man, Blinky Sam, pats me upon the shoulder, and assures Low Brow that he bets dat kid'll soon do away wit' as much booze as any blowed-in-de-glass stiff, and I feel that I must live up to this reputation or lose caste in the eyes of my new companions. So, with a brave show of manly courage, but with many inward qualms and misgivings, I drink the contents of a greasy tomato-can, though my stomach revolts.

"Dat's de bloke for ye," says my companion, with a placid smile. "Inside of a mont' he'll t'row his feet (beg) fer togs an' booze (clothes and drink) like de best of 'em."

He is so elated at my progress that he insists upon my partaking of another can of beer. I remonstrate feebly, but am so impressed by his confidence in me that my conscience smites me with my ingratitude towards the man who takes such an unfeigned interest in my welfare, so I swallow as much as I can ere returning the can to him.

And now the Lame Man, and the Blind Man, and the Deaf Man sing a jolly song together, and rise, and join hands as though they had always been the best of friends.

"Oh, we are t'ree bums,  
T'ree jolly ole bums,  
We live like royal Toiks.  
We have good luck  
In bummin' our chuck—  
To hell wit' de man dat woiks!"

Their voices are so raucous, and they look so droll as they hop about, that I cannot restrain my laughter. I laugh, and I laugh, and I laugh, and after a while the whole group about me bursts into laughter; but whereas



I gaze at the trio whose actions have aroused my mirth, the others all gaze at me whilst laughing. And, when I observe that the foolish fellows laugh at me instead of at the three funny tramps, I am so amused at the absurdity of their conduct that I roar until my sides ache.

The frightened look upon the face of Red Eyes gives place to one of amusement as he gazes at me and laughs; the saturnine countenance of the dark man, Dandy Dan, expands into a grin; everybody is laughing aloud — even the Blind Man, and the Deaf Man, and the Lamé Man stop singing to look at me and laugh. Everybody laughs at me —

Everybody? No, not everybody. *She* does not laugh.

Perhaps it is because she is a woman, and therefore endowed with more tenderness than man. Perhaps, being a woman, it is given her to look beneath the surface of things and to discover the tragedy which so often lurks beneath a laugh. Now, after many years, I am sure that the sight of the drunken child amid that crowd of vagabonds filled her with no mirth, but only with sadness and pity. I could not understand it then; but now that I have passed through darkness and shadow, over crags and jutting rocks, and have been bruised in the struggle of life until my strength has often failed me — now that I am bruised and scarred with my struggles and my defeats, I can understand why she felt pity, though others laughed.

I see her now, leaving the side of Dandy Dick and drawing near to me; I feel her arms about me, clasping me close to her as though to shelter me; I see her gazing with pitying eyes at my laughing countenance, and hear her murmur: "Poor kid! Poor kid!"

And then things grow dim and distorted. The faces about me bob up and down, the fire assumes fantastic

shapes, the objects about me dance and whirl around in the oddest manner. A mad world surely. But maddest of all am I as, with that hideous grin fading from my childish countenance, I sink into a drunken sleep.

## CHAPTER III

### ABOUT THE LIFE OF THE HOBO, AND HOW RED EYES AND I PARTAKE OF CANDY, AND WHAT FOLLOWS

In the days that follow I acquire some knowledge of the life and habits of the tramp, and learn what manner of men these are with whom I have come in contact.

A large proportion of the tramps who infest this country are discouraged criminals. These are held in highest esteem by the tramp fraternity for two reasons: first, because they possess the sharpest wits, and secondly, because the dangers which formerly beset them in their battle with the hobo's inveterate foes, the detective and the policeman, impart a halo to their past which appeals to the imagination of the outcast.

Dandy Dan belonged to this class. Three things conspired to make him a menace to society in his early youth. He was born of criminal parents. He was born and reared in that section of New York known as Mulberry Bend. He was born a criminal.

Now, a man may be born of criminal parents and yet escape the taint of crime. But if, in addition, he be born in Mulberry Bend, he is doubly damned; and nothing in this world can save him.

So Dandy Dan was born a criminal, reared a criminal, associated with criminals, and remained a criminal throughout life.

By the time that he was sixteen he had acquired the reputation of being one of the most dangerous pickpockets

in New York. He had been arrested six times; but had never been convicted. A year later he was arrested *and* convicted, and was sent to the Elmira Reformatory. Emerging from that institution, he was again arrested and sentenced to prison; and, in the ten years which followed, he spent most of his time behind bars.

At the age of thirty he concluded that a life of crime was no longer alluring. In other words, he was discouraged. Unwilling to earn an honest livelihood, he adopted the easiest and least hazardous method of preying upon society: he became a tramp.

At first the society of the ignorant ragamuffins with whom he was thrown into contact disgusted him. But he soon found that life amid these vagabonds had its compensations. In the World of Crime, he was, notwithstanding his local notoriety, but a lowly member of an august assemblage: in Hoboland, however, he was honoured as a hero.

For Hoboland recognises caste, even as the World of Labour recognises class distinctions; and the barrier which separates the vagrant criminal from the tomato-can stiff is as strong and as insurmountable as that which separates the millionaire from the penniless clerk. And yet the partition which separates the hobo from his wealthy brother is sometimes thin and slight. The habitually idle poor enter Hoboland; the habitually idle rich enter Society.

Note the resemblance between the two. Idle poor and idle rich. Fate cast one upon the dunghill, and the other upon a silken cover-lid embroidered in gold. Take away the dunghill and the silk, and behold two brethren feeding on futility and playing with the wind.

How many tramps there are in this country it is impossible to state. Their number has been variously estimated from one hundred thousand to five hundred thou-



sand. Of this vast army a large percentage is composed of boys.

The Boy is a dreamer. He loves brave deeds: he loves romance: he loves adventure. He admires a brave man and a brave deed. He does not inquire into character, but he gloats over courageous exploits. To him the policeman is a hero, the detective is a hero, the train robber is a hero: every man who perils his life without flinching is a hero.

David slaying Goliath: Jesse James, the outlaw, robbing a train. Both brave men. Both heroes. Both equally heroic in the eyes of the Boy. Nay, if the truth be told, the outlaw looming up more prominently as being nearer home, and hence more distinct. Moral values count for little, physical courage is everything.

Now consider this Boy, with his love of adventure, at the age when the wanderlust first seizes him, as it seizes all boys. He is aflame with eagerness to see the world — to be a sailor, a stage driver, an employé in a distant city — in other words, to be anywhere but at home.

Near his home lie the railroad tracks. There, too, is the freight station. What fun for the boys to jump aboard a stationary car, or one that is moving slowly, ride for a few blocks, and then jump off! In the box-cars the Boy meets the Hobo, listens to tales of the "road," learns how the tramp rides upon the bumpers of cars, or upon the trucks beneath, close to the wheels, holding on to the iron rods; how the brakeman seeks to ditch (put off) the trespasser, and how the tramp evades his enemy. To ride thus through the country, from city to city, and from state to state; or to enter a box-car and to be carried, undiscovered, to far distant places; and, withal, to be free, masterless, unshackled by conventions — this is a picture of an adventurous life which appeals to the Boy.

So the Boy yields to the fascination of the empty cars, and is carried far away; and in nine cases out of ten never returns.

The railroads are the tramp's means of transportation. To-day in New York, to-morrow in Buffalo, next day in Chicago — a free life to which he clings tenaciously, and which he will not abandon.

He will beg his food from door to door, eat his three or four meals per day, and, if he be a blowed-in-the-glass stiff, true to the traditions of his kind, he will flee from work as though it were poison.

Does he not despise the man who, bereft of employment, "strikes the road" yet deigns to labour when the opportunity to do so is offered him? Does he not hate the "gay-cat" who accepts employment intermittently? Let no true hobo associate with such as these, for they are anathema.

Into such a world of outcasts am I now thrown, and lives such as these I am now fated to share.

"Come wit' me," says Blinkey Sam, "an' I'll show ye how te t'row yer feet."

I go with him, and wander through the streets from door to door, listening to his appeals for food and money, and, young though I be, I feel myself a party to his deception, and something within me revolts at my degradation. Mind you, I do not feel this keenly — I am too young to fully realise my position — but I know that it is wrong to practise deceit and to lie, and I feel that I am participating in both deception and lies.

Sometimes, at night, when I lie before the fire and gaze up at the stars, I ask myself: What would mamma say if she knew? And then my heart answers me amid the darkness, and I know what mamma would say; and I turn my face away from the fire and pretend to sleep, so that

no one may see the tears upon my face, or perceive that I cannot control my sobs.

But Blinkey Sam is light-hearted and happy, for purses are opened readily enough at sight of a little boy leading his blind father; and Sam's face beams as he pats me upon the shoulder and assures me that as a moocher (beggar) I got 'em all skinned alive w'en et comes te batterin' (begging) fer scoff (food) an' dough (money).

"De t'ing te do," he says on the first day whereon we start out together, "is never te toot de ringer (pull the bell). W'en a bum toots de ringer an' makes de lady come te de door she'll sure be horstile (unfriendly). Go roun' de back way, but steer clear o' dorgs. Dorgs is a noosance, and I hates noosances, 'specially dem wot bites."

One day, while my companion stands in front of a mill at Kearney, imploring pedestrians to assist a blind man, he gives me permission to stroll about for an hour ere re-joining him. As I walk leisurely along a narrow street I meet Red Eyes; and, though we have spoken little to each other at the "hang-out," a common impulse leads us to enter into conversation, now that we are alone, and feel the spirit of youth drawing boy to boy.

"Hello!" he says, as he draws near.

"Hello!" I return.

"Did ye mooch much to-day?" he queries, without any show of interest in the subject matter, but evidently for the sole purpose of opening conversation.

"About toity cen's."

"W'ere d'ye live?"

"No place," and then I add: "Me mudder's dead, an' me fahder, too."

"So's mine." He gazes about him furtively, although the nearest house is fully a hundred feet distant; then he



adds gloomily: "Ef dey wuz alive I woulden' be here."

"Don' ye like et?"

"Like et? I mus' like et. I'll git killed if I don' like et."

"Who'll kill ye?"

Again that furtive glance about him ere replying. "He. I'm afraid of 'im. He'll kill me. He's got eyes all oveh. He watches me all de time. I'm afraid."

This time I, too, glance about me, for the picture of an individual with eyes all over him is hardly designed to fill a boy's heart with cheer. But there is no one near, and there is something pathetic in the lad's mien which draws me closer to him. And, after all, he is but a boy, and I am a boy, and we are both alone in this world.

"Let's buy candy," I suggest cheerily. To my surprise, however, he shakes his head.

"No," he says, "I got te give 'im all I mooch, or he'll kill me."

"Who?"

"Ye know," he replies impatiently. "Dandy Dan. Ef he hears dat I spend any money an' didn' bring et te 'im he'll — he'll —"

He finishes the sentence with a shudder.

"I'll treat ye," I hastily assure him. "I got five cen's in me pocket. Come on."

He gazes at me for a moment dubiously, as though hardly crediting the evidence of his ears. Nothing can be more eloquent than the look of doubt upon his face; nothing can bear stronger testimony to cruelty and neglect than the incredulity with which he receives my impulsive offer. But a glance at my face seems to reassure him. He smiles; he laughs; his sorrows and wrongs are forgotten in a moment. He is suddenly transformed into the boy that God made and Man unmade.



We enter a confectionery store, and I purchase candy, which I divide fairly with my companion.

"Oh, ain't et good!" he exclaims, smacking his lips; and then we saunter along the street and indulge in boyish conversation. After a time he confides in me that he hates Dandy Dan, and that he would like to run away but is afraid. Also that "de on'y one wot I don' hate is Gypsy Liz. She don' hit me neveh, an' she kissed me wonst."

As we lie about the fire at the "hang-out" that evening, I witness a scene which makes my flesh quiver. Dandy Dan is in ill-humour to-day. I perceive this as I note the frown which hovers about his brow. The woman who has cast her lot with him also perceives it, and her face grows troubled. She prepares the "scoff" quietly, and speaks very gently and apologetically whenever she addresses him; but howsoever gentle and apologetic her manner may be, it does not serve to soften his eyes, or to smoothen out his frowning brow. I think he must have been drinking too freely, but of this I am not sure.

Half an hour after Blinkey Sam and I reach the "hang-out," Red Eyes arrives, and hands to his "jocker"—to the man whose protégé he is, and who should instruct and protect him—the money which he has "mooched" that day.

"What have you got upon your face?" inquires the dark man in his cold, even tones, as he deposits the money in his pocket.

"Nahten'," says the boy, with a troubled look upon his countenance.

"Why is your mouth so sticky?"

Red Eyes begins to tremble; and I am filled with a great fear lest the man attack me for sharing my candy with the boy.

"Et ain' sticky," protests the boy feebly, while terror gathers in his watery eyes.

"It's candy."

The boy makes no denial, nor does he open his lips.

"You've been eating candy."

The boy says nothing, but trembles perceptibly.

"Where did you get it?"

I clutch Blinkey Sam's coat (he is sitting beside me) and draw closer to him. I am afraid of the boy's answer, afraid to draw down upon me the wrath of that evil being whom all fear, and I hold my breath as I wait for the reply.

"Anodder boy bought et fer me."

"What other boy?"

I stifle the cry which rises to my lips lest the dark man hear it.

"I dunno."

I can scarcely believe my ears. Is it possible that this outcast whom I scarcely know is seeking to screen me, even though, by so doing, he incur the wrath of the evil genius who mars his life?

"You're lying." As Dandy Dan speaks, he loosens a heavy leather belt which he wears about his trousers, and fingers the metal buckle thereon which gleams in the fire-light.

"You bought candy with my money, you dog."

"I didn'," sobs the boy, shrinking back.

"Then who gave it to you?"

Red Eyes opens his lips, turns half way round as though to appeal to me, and then, reconsidering, faces the man, and says nothing.

The belt is raised, and, in that moment, descends; and the buckle strikes the boy's head, and cuts it so that the blood suddenly gathers upon his forehead.

I yearn to cry out, to tell the man that it was I who

purchased the candy; but I am afraid — I am in deadly fear of that cruel hand which punishes so relentlessly, and I am too much of a child, and too cowardly, to invite an attack.

Red Eyes gives a cry of pain, and staggers; but, ere he falls, the iron buckle again strikes him (this time upon the cheek) and then there breaks from him such a cry of agony as haunts me for many, many months; and he sinks to the ground with his bloody face resting upon his outstretched arm.

The faces about me betray no emotion; only Gypsy Liz moans as the boy falls to the ground. But I am afraid — afraid of the dark man with the evil heart, afraid of the men about me who sit there calmly and permit such deeds to be done, afraid of the darkness, of the night, of the lonely marshes and the sighing winds — and my heart moans with pity for the boy who would not betray me.

I creep to his side late at night, when all the others are asleep, and rest my hand upon his shoulder, not knowing how else to express my sympathy. He is awake, and is moaning, and his face is bloody.

“I like ye,” I whisper, with a sob.

“Git away, damn ye!” he murmurs fiercely, kicking me viciously in the shins.

And I crawl away, and sleep but little that night.

## CHAPTER IV

### WHEREIN BLINKEY SAM DESERTS ME AND LEAVES ME WITH THE DARK MAN

Seven days after I cast my lot with Blinkey Sam he informs me that it is time for us to be amovin', an' we could be in Chi (Chicago) in a couple o' days ef I on'y knowed how te ride de trucks or wasen' so green at ridin' de blind baggage. Ah, ef I could on'y hold a train down!

Now, to hold a train down means to remain thereon, and to ride gratuitously, despite the efforts of the trainmen to eject one. Sometimes the hobo rides upon the tops of the cars (the decks, he calls them); sometimes he stands upon the bumpers of box-cars, obliged to maintain his precarious foothold for hours upon a train going at the rate of fifty miles an hour; sometimes he is fortunate enough to climb, unobserved, into an empty freight car where he may travel in comparative comfort; and sometimes he clings for hours to the iron rods beneath the train, lying upon the cold metal, with the four wheels and the framework of the trucks about him, close to the ground which sends its dust and its pebbles into his nose and ears and eyes (if he open them) as the train rushes on.

So it is not surprising that Blinkey Sam deploras my inexperience in riding the cars, and hesitates to take me with him to Chicago. For he *does* hesitate. I read that in his voice and in his eyes, and I feel sorely troubled at the prospect of having the protection of a man withdrawn from me, and being forced to wander about penniless.

Blinkey Sam is drunk to-night, and his ruddy nose and



cheeks seem redder than ever by contrast with his prematurely grey beard. We sit before the fire at the hang-out, and the wanderlust is in his blood as he stares before him into the darkness which broods over the marshlands.

"Ef et wasen' fer you," he says, and his voice is husky with emotion and whisky, "I'd 'a' been holdin' de train down long ago. Dis is a bum town anyhow. Heah we wuz batterin' de main stem all day fer light-pieces (begging in the main street all day for money) an' wot did we git? Not a dozen coppers, an' me putty neah dead wit' woik."

Now, in intimating that he has been engaged all day in his vocation, Blinkey Sam does not confine himself to facts. The major portion of the day has been passed by him in genial intercourse with a red-faced barkeeper. I have been with him, frequently patronising the free-lunch counter in the course of the day, but not partaking of any drink except at the noon hour, when I drink a glass of beer with my bologna sandwich.

"Heah am I," continues Blinkey Sam, "shatin' on me uppers (wholly without funds) an' livin' on wind-puddin' (air). Et's lucky we ain' got te go to a doss-house (lodging house) at night, an' dat we got dis hang-out. Wit' all dem horstile bulls (hostile policemen) about, a bloke's lucky ef he's got a place w'ere he kin pound his ear (go to sleep)."

"What's the matter?" queries Dandy Dan. "Have you got your eye glued on Chi?"

"Et's de road-feveh," says my companion, huskily. "I'm sick o' York (New York) an' de jay towns around et. I wan's te be on de side-door Pullman (box-car) or de blind-baggage (baggage car with no door in front) and feel I'm livin'."

"But what'll you do with the kid?"

"I dunno. I wan's te go 'way," he wails. "I wan's te drill 'long de railroad. I'm tired o' stayin' round dese 'ere towns. I wan's te go west — te Chi, an' 'Frisco, an' all dem places. Wot sort o' life is dis, anyhow, fer a ole stager wot's been on de road his hull life, an' knows et down to de ground? Gimme de west wit'—"

"Give ye hell!" growls Lanky Jack, the Deaf and Dumb Man, who is preparing for slumber. "Can't ye let a feller take a doss (sleep)?"

"Why don't you go?" says Dan. "What's keeping you back?"

"I got te learn de kid foist how te ride de trucks an'—"

"Learn nothing! Can't you leave him with me 'till you want him? I'll teach him the ropes. I'll want what he mooches so long as he stays with me; but I'll make a blowed-in-the-glass stiff out of him, and you can have him any time you want him."

"Will ye gimme de kid any time I wan's 'im?"

"Why, sure. You're his jocker (tramp foster parent)."

"Den he's yourn till I gits back. An' te-morrer I'm off fer Chi."

I listen with sinking heart. I am afraid — afraid to remain silent lest my silence be misconstrued as acquiescence; afraid to protest lest I be beaten; but most of all afraid of the dark man with his black, piercing eyes, and his cold, passionless voice. And I utter no word, but lie down with the others, though I well know that sleep will not visit me that night.

No, sleep will not visit me. I hear a sound as of the beating of a hammer in my ears, but it is only the beating of a child's terror-stricken heart. I watch the fire dying out, and hear voices, harsh and indistinct, calling to me from the darkness; but it is only the voice of fear whisper-

ing and muttering amid the gloom. I say my Hebrew night-prayers and, having said them, repeat them in the hope that God will take pity upon me and save me from the man whom I fear. And finally I whisper brokenly: "Mamma! O mamma dear!" knowing that, if she were here, all the forces of evil which assail the world would be powerless to harm me; but she is not here, so I can only call upon her name, and sob bitterly.

But after a while my desperation gives me courage. I raise my head and observe that all are asleep. The fire is low, and casts but a faint glow over the scene. Cautiously raising my body, I begin to crawl carefully away from the fire and from the group about it. But, careful though I strive to be, I cannot avoid some twigs which lie in my path, and which snap as I come in contact with them.

"Who's dat?" queries Lanky Jack, raising his head.

His voice rouses the dark man, who raises himself upon his elbow, and asks me what I'm doing.

"Nothin'," I murmur, with a heavy heart. I lie down upon the ground disheartened, and abandon all hope of escape.

All night long a hammer beats in my ears; and the voices call to me from the darkness; and fear holds me in its grasp; and I turn from side to side restlessly, and cannot sleep. It is only towards morning that fatigue overcomes me and closes my eyelids.

When I open my eyes I find Blinkey Sam shaking me, and bidding me get up.

"I gotta git out o' heah, an' I guess I'm goin' west, an' I wanta say s' long te ye 'fore I goes." He smiles reassuringly at me, and his hand rests upon my shoulder with rough kindness, as though he regrets leaving me in the care of others, and feels ill at ease.

"I'm goin' te leave ye wit' Dandy Dan. Not all the



time," he adds hastily, observing the look upon my face, "but on'y till I gits back. He's all right," he hastens to say, reassuringly; "he won' hoit ye. Ye ain't his kid, anyhow — ye're mine — an' if he touches ye I'll knock hell out o' him w'en I gits back. But he won' touch ye — he'll on'y loin ye how to batter like a perfesh (professional) an' den ye'll have a easy time of et afteh dat."

I am afraid that I do not appear to be much elated at the bright prospects set before me, and that he observes my depression of spirits, for he continues, with affected gaiety: "Oh, but et's de gay old time we'll be havin' w'en I comes back an' yez'll know de ropes so's ye kin go wit' me, ridin' de blind-baggage, an' de side-door Pullman, an' beatin' de shacks (brakemen), an' seein' de country like a millionaire, wit' nahtin' te worry about 'xceptin' yer scoff (food)."

Perceiving that not even his affected gaiety has power to make me smile, he abandons his efforts at cheering me, and holds out his hand sheepishly as he bids me good-bye.

"Gimme yer hand, kid," he says gently, and I put my hand in his, and strive to control the quivering of my lips. "Ye're a good prushun," he continues kindly, "an' I likes ye, kid. I'd like te hev yez wit' me all de time, like hash in a boardin'-house; but I'll be back soon — so don' worry. S'long!"

I watch his retreating figure as he wends his way over the swamps in the direction of the railroad tracks. Gypsy Mary, who is building a fire, invites me cheerily to take a can of coffee to warm me up. Dandy Dan rises from the ground and gazes alternately at me and at Red Eyes as he gulps down the hot drink.

"Mary," he says, "I think I'll take the kid over to Mulberry Bend to-day to put him in training."



"Not there, Dan!" she says, in startled tones. "Not to Mulberry Bend!"

"Why not?" he asks in those icy tones which she knows so well.

"Oh, please, Dan," the woman implores him, "please don' take 'im te Mulberry Bend. He ain't used to it. Anybody kin see he ain't brought up to dat sort o' life."

"He ain't, eh?" and the dark man smiles mockingly as he says it: "not used to it, eh? Well, I guess he'll be used to it before I get through with him."

The tone in which he utters this, rather than the words themselves, increases my dread of him; and I shrink back trembling as he turns his black, piercing eyes upon me. For now he is my master.

## CHAPTER V

WHEREIN I AM TAKEN TO MULBERRY BEND AND BECOME  
ACQUAINTED WITH THE PARENTS OF DANDY DAN AND  
WITH THE MONK

The fog is lying thick upon the Hudson, and the sirens of the ferryboats are tooting forth warnings to all the river-craft which struggle ponderously through the mists.

The fog is lying thick upon the East River, and upon the North River; and the ferryhouses and piers are but faint outlines, vainly struggling to assume tangible forms.

It lies upon the water like a cloak, and, as it spreads out, the buildings along the river's banks sink into its folds, and the streets of the great city grow blurred and indistinct, and the trestles of the elevated roads become vague and shadowy, and from east to west, from river to river, New York lies panting and struggling in the mantle which envelops it.

Manhattan's tallest building at this time is Trinity Church; but its steeple is lost somewhere in the swirling mist. Broadway is wet and dirty, and its sidewalks are thronged with hurrying shadows which loom up through the fog and then are gone. In the streets the horse-cars are rolling past noisily, and the horses are shaking their manes, and the drivers are cracking their whips, and cars and horses and drivers are swathed in mist.

The fog comes rolling in from the Lower Bay, and from the ocean beyond, and lands at the Battery, and comes surging across lower New York. It engulfs Broadway,

which grows misty and grey. It invades Park Row, and fills it with moving shadows; and the newspaper offices looming up in Newspaper Row bob up and down through the mists like vast ships anchored in an ocean of fog. The approach to the new Brooklyn Bridge which is in course of construction, is half hidden in the semi-gloom; and further on the Bowery, stretching forth a grey arm, takes hold of Park Row and draws it into its path.

On roll the mists and pile cloud upon cloud. The trees in the Park drip with moisture, and the marble front of the City Hall is dark and uninviting on this gloomy day. The rear of the building is not of marble, but of red sandstone, for, when it was erected, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was believed that New York would never grow to importance north of this building, and that therefore the northerly side of the edifice would, as a contemporary writer declared, "be out of sight to all the world."

But New York *has* grown northward, and there millions of its sons live, and struggle, and die. And among these millions there are thousands upon thousands who fester in darkness and rot away, quite "out of sight to all the world," quite accustomed to darkness, and to darkness only, and to the fogs which sweep through their grey lives as it sweeps through the streets of the city on this chill day.

And the fog rolls on, dense, and almost impenetrable. Broadway is wet and grey and dreary, and Park Row is filled with moving shadows; and finally, starting from Park Row and winding its way like a serpent amid slime and filth, comes Mulberry Street, to fill the nostrils of the city with the stench of its foul deeds.

But the foulest place in Mulberry Street, and the foulest place on the island of Manhattan is Mulberry Bend,

and fouler than this stagnant pool of vice can no place be. Here rotten tenements shake their frowsy heads and leer at the garbage piled up in their alleys.

These alleys running from nowhere unto nowhere, alongside cellars where the light never enters and where nothing can live but beast-men and beast-women and rats; behind foul rookeries where skulk the murderer and the abandoned tramp; beside hideous plague-spots where the stench is overpouring — Bottle Alley, where the rag-pickers pile their bags of stinking stuff, and the Whyo Gang murders its victims and defies the police, Bandits' Roost where evil-visaged beings prowl about, hunting for prey — dozens of alleys winding in and out and intersecting, so that the beast may slay his prey, and hide in the jungle, and be safe: these foul alleys — who shall picture them, or explore their depths, or describe their wretchedness and their hideousness?

A picturesque street is Mulberry Street in the bright light of the day, when its sidewalks are crowded with swarthy Italians whose red and yellow bandanas lend color to the scene, and whose push carts, thronging the streets, are filled with red apples, and yellow oranges, and with cheap cloths of brilliant hues. Upon the doorsteps weary mothers are nursing little babes who will never know the meaning of innocent childhood, but will be versed in the immoral lore of the Underworld before they learn their alphabet. Ragged children covered with filth play about the push carts and the horses in the street, while their mothers chatter in greasy doorways, or shout from upper windows unto the hordes below, or clatter about creaky floors, preparing the foul mess of tainted edibles which constitutes a meal.

All day long the street is thronged at Mulberry Bend. All day long the women, with unwashed waists ablaze



with color, haggle at the push carts. All day long men shout with strident voices, or stand idly upon the sidewalks, awaiting the approach of darkness. And all day long the hucksters and the peddlers shout from their carts, or sell the tainted fruit which lies piled upon inverted ash barrels and sooty boxes.

At some time in the day some gleams of sunlight enter most of the structures fronting on the street. Not all of them, mind you, but at some time most of them catch some straying gleam of sunlight which God shakes out of the sky so that it may lose its way and drop with its wealth of gold into some dark hole where a startled child, unaccustomed to such wealth, may stretch out a tiny hand and seek to play with it.

But in the rookeries which, like their inmates, skulk and hide out of sight of the crowded street; in these ramshackle structures which line the back-alleys and there breed their human vermin amid dirt and rags — in these there is no direct sunlight throughout all the long year. Rookeries close to the front windows, shutting out light and air, and rookeries close to the rear windows, and rookeries close to each side, and never a breath of fresh air to ventilate one of these holes wherein men and women and children wallow in dirt, and live and fight and drink and die, and finally give way to others of their kind.

And hither it is that Dandy Dan brings me on this foggy day — across the North River whose ferry-boats shriek and toot as they loom up in the mist; through the crowded streets where I am jostled and pushed about; past the trestles of the elevated roads which fill me with alarm lest some train come hurtling down upon my unprotected head and crush me; and finally into Mulberry Street, with its push carts and noisy throngs.

We halt before a three-story brick house in the very

centre of the Bend. There is a saloon on the ground floor; and to the side is a dirty hallway with worn steps leading upstairs.

"Come on!" says my companion. I step forward to enter the hallway; but he grasps my coat and pulls me back.

"Not there," he says; "come this way."

He points to a narrow space between the house before which we have halted and the adjoining tenement. It is so narrow a space that I had not noticed it before; but it is big enough for him to push his body through and to pull me after him. I find myself walking in total darkness along a very narrow alley between the brick walls of the two buildings; but, after a short distance, there is a break in one of the walls, and the alley widens perceptibly, and soon we emerge upon what is meant to be a rear yard but is really another alley running along the rear of the Mulberry Street tenements; and fronting upon this alley are numerous shacks so old and dilapidated that their rotting walls seem ready to tumble down at the slightest touch, and one huge rookery, six stories in height, which bulges out and resembles a monstrous beetle crawling out of the earth.

Six stories in height; and on each floor a porch whereon bags of rags are piled, and empty bottles, and cast-off clothing, and dirty mattresses, and empty pails and cans.

I look up at the sky and find that it is gone; that man has shut it out with these hideous death-traps, leaving nothing but a little speck of misty grey visible far overhead to remind one that there once was a sun and a blue sky somewhere above the earth before the tenements drove them away.

It is so dark here that it seems to be dusk, though the afternoon is not yet far advanced. But it is much darker

within the house, and especially in the grog-shop down in the cellar, where a candle is burning fitfully.

"I'm thirsty," says Dan. "Let's get a drink."

He descends two stone steps and opens a creaking door, and I follow him, for I am afraid to remain alone in this dark alley where hideous faces peer at me from grimy windows, and children raise their fists threateningly from behind the broken panes.

We enter a dark room, at one end of which (where the candle flickers) there is a bar, behind which beer kegs are piled up. There are three tables in the room, and half a dozen tramps are seated about them, and are sleeping, with their heads resting upon the boards. There is a sickening odor of stale beer and filth about the place which at first nauseates me. The barkeeper — a low-browed giant with one eye gone, torn out in a fight — scrutinises my companion a moment before appearing to recognise him.

"Hello, Dan," he cries gruffly. "How de hell ah ye?"

"Give me a drink."

"Wot'll ye have?"

"What have you got?"

"Beer?"

"Not the rotten kind you sell. D'you take me for a tomato-can stiff?"

One of the figures at a table raises a bloated face and growls: "Who d'ye call termata-can stiff?"

"You," retorts my companion calmly, "if it strikes you; and if you don't like it I'll punch daylight through your putty-faced mug."

The man with the bloated face rises unsteadily to his feet; and, as he steadies himself against the table, I see a razor gleaming in his hand.



"He's got a knife," I shriek in terror. But Dan has also seen the weapon, and, with one spring, is at his throat. The razor drops to the floor, and the drunkard's face grows purple as the fingers of the dark man press mercilessly upon his throat.

"Give 'im te me," says the barkeeper as he grasps the fellow by the nape of the neck. With a quick movement of his brawny arms he flings the drunken tramp across the room to the door. This he opens; then, raising his right foot, he kicks the man out into the alley and against the stone steps, from which the fellow's body rebounds with a dull thud, and drops bleeding and senseless against the door which closes upon it.

"Give me some whisky," says Dan to the one-eyed giant; then, turning to me, he asks me what I'll take. I answer that I'm not thirsty; but I hold him in such dread, and am so fearful of displeasing him, that I hasten to add that I'll take a little beer, which is forthwith poured out and set before me.

I have never before tasted the flat beer which is gathered from discarded beer kegs, treated with some drug which causes it to froth, and then served in the two-cent dives of the slums. I take a mouthful, and then spit it out with a wry face. Dandy Dan laughs.

"He doesn't like it, Jim," he says to the barkeeper. "Neither do I."

"Oh, he'll git used to et quick enough ef he stays in Mulberry Bend."

He gulps down his whisky, then turns to go, and bids me come along. As we step out of the door he stumbles over the drunken man, who is regaining consciousness. With an oath, he kicks the body of the vagrant aside, and we ascend the stone steps, and find ourselves in the alley. From the grimy windows on all sides there still



peer forth dozens of hideous faces; and gaunt little fists again threaten me as their owners scowl at the interloper in their alley. I shrink closer to my companion, and am relieved to find that we are not to traverse the alley, but are to enter the dark hallway of the huge rookery which crawls, like a monstrous beetle, out of the ground.

There are children playing in the hallway; but I cannot see them, for it is pitch dark. I hear them running about somewhere, far ahead, and hear the voice of a child uttering shrill curses, and the voice of a man saying approvingly: "He goota boy. He swear lika Mericana."

I stumble over something, and bend down to find that it is a little baby, sleeping in the dark hallway. Perhaps the parents are away at work. More probably they are in a saloon, drinking stale beer at two cents a glass, and leaving the baby to shift for itself. For in Mulberry Bend babies must learn to somehow shift for themselves or die. The majority do the latter.

We come to a stairway which we ascend, holding on to a broken balustrade which sways at our touch. The steps are worn and, in some places, broken. As we reach the first landing, a pitcherful of water descends from the floor above us, and deluges our clothing.

"What the devil are you doing?" shouts Dan angrily. A laugh answers us, and a woman's voice mutters huskily: "I t'ought et wuz Mike." Then it adds resentfully: "Wot t'ell you doin' in dis house anyhow?" and a door is closed with a bang.

"Hold on to my coat," my companion admonishes me, and I obey, for I have been stumbling about in the gloom, wondering which way I should turn. The dark man is evidently familiar with the place, for he walks on with sure steps, though even he is obliged to guide himself in the darkness by the insecure balustrade. We pass several

children upon the staircase, but they brush past us without a word. Sometimes an open door discloses a disordered room whose furniture seems merely a collection of wrecks — of broken chairs, and a rickety table, and a tottering stove. And then another door, opening, discloses another room of furniture wrecks, and human wrecks, too, sitting about, and drinking, and smoking, and cursing.

Higher and higher; and on the fourth floor two children are crying that they are hungry and want somethin' te eat, and a woman's voice bids them shut up, or she'll call de cop an' have 'em pinched. And then one of the children (it is a boy's voice) says that dey gits bread an' water in de pen (penitentiary), an' he wishes he wuz pinched so's he kin git sometin' te eat. But the other child (a girl) still wails that she's hungry, she's hungry, an' she wants te eat.

Higher and higher, and now we are on the fifth floor; and from below comes the wail of the two children crying for bread, while from the floor above comes the sound of a violin, and then a quavering tenor voice singing an aria from "Il Trovatore":

*"Non ti scordar di me —"*

"Shut up, ye dago!" cries a voice, irascibly, as a door opens down the hallway and a woman reels forth.

The music stops; and a door opens above our heads, and a thin voice — the voice of an old man — protests apologetically:

"Dat gooda moosic. Dat 'Trovatore' opera. Dat —"

"T'ell wit' yer moosic, or I'll smash yer doity ole mug."

"Here we are," says my companion, as we reach a door

on the fifth floor, close to the head of the stairs; and, as he speaks, he turns the knob, and enters.

At first I can scarcely distinguish anything within the room. There is a window in the wall; but it is so close to the adjoining tenement, and so little light finds its way between the two walls, that the room is shrouded in darkness. The foul odour which assails my nostrils as the door opens makes me hesitate a moment as I stand upon the threshold; but Dandy Dan closes the door behind me, and says: "Hello, old woman, don't you know me?"

From somewhere in the gloom a woman rises and says in a hoarse, croaking voice: "Who's there?"

"Who's there?" repeats my companion. "I'm there."

"It's Dan — me good boy Dan," she says in delight. "An' w'ere've ye been? An' wot've ye been doin' all this time?"

"Light up — light up," says Dan impatiently. "Don't keep us standing here in the dark."

Somewhere in the gloom she finds a match which she proceeds to ignite; and soon a kerosene lamp diffuses its yellow light through the room. Then I perceive that I am in a little box of a room, with a little cracked stove close to a broken window across which some rags are nailed to keep out the cold, and a shaky deal table supported by two boxes in the centre of the room, and three rickety chairs about the table, and on the floor, close to the wall which faces the door, a big heap of rags whose foul odour fills the room.

The woman is old, and grey, and lean, and bony. Her face is yellow and repulsive; and one of her upper teeth extends down over her lower lip when her mouth is closed, like the tusk of a beast. She is attired in a ragged black dress patched with cloths of divers colours — chiefly red



and green and yellow — though the patches themselves are so worn as to require patching; and, as she approaches us with the lamp in her hand, her black eyes seem to catch the yellow light of the lamp, and to grow yellow too.

“An’ who is this, Danny, me boy?” she croaks as she scrutinises me, and thrusts the light so close to my face that I retreat in alarm. “Who is this kid that ye’ve brung along this time? He’d make a good moocher or a fine dip (pickpocket) if he wuz trained right — wouldn’t ye, kid?”

She smiles upon me so horribly, and the yellow tusk in her mouth gleams so hideously in the light of the lamp, that I lay my trembling hands upon my companion for protection.

He tells her curtly to quit her jabbering and get supper ready; so she turns from me, and places the lamp upon the table, and busies herself about the stove.

“So Danny’s back again,” she murmurs. “An’ it’s a han’some boy he is, and he don’t fergit his mother. But w’ere’ve ye been all this year that ye’ve been gone? Wuz ye pinched, me boy?”

No, her boy assures her, he was not pinched. He was on the road, travelling in the side-door Pullmans, and seeing the country.

“Oh, but it’s a fine, rich life ye’ve got,” she croaks admiringly, “jes’ like yer gran’daddy before he wuz hunged. There wuz a man for ye, Danny, me boy — such a gentleman he wuz w’en he wuz sober, an’ so handy with the gun. There ain’t none such to-day,” she pursues, shaking her head mournfully. “They don’t grow like they did wonst before Byrnes got on the job with his fly-cops (detectives).”

“Where’s the old man?”

“He ain’t home yet.”



"And The Monk?"

"Out with the ole man."

"How are things?"

"Nothin' to brag about; but The Monk's gettin' the dough (money) putty good."

"You're a sharp set, you two," says Dan, with a note of admiration in his voice. "You know the tricks of the game, you do. I wish I was as sharp as you."

"Oho!" she squeals with a chuckle of satisfaction, as she leers upon me. "He calls us sharp, he does, ez though any one could be ez sharp ez Dandy Dan. Oho! but he likes te say nice things te his ole mother, an' make her feel good. Oh, he's a good boy—he's a good boy—jes' like his gran'daddy wot wuz hunged; but they won' never hang him 'cause he's too sharp—Oh, he's too sharp te be caught, is me Danny, he is. Te hell wit' de perlice ennyhow!"

She resumes her work, mumbling to herself, and chuckling. "How's things with you?" she queries, after a pause.

"On the bum," the son answers surlily. "Mooching is played out, and prushuns can't pay for their jockers' togs and booze (clothes and drink)."

"Leave 'em with me, Danny dear," she cries, shaking her head, and transfixing me with her small, sharp eyes. "I'll learn 'em the ropes. They'll know the game w'en they gets through with me. Leave 'em with me. I'll make a man out of 'em all."

"That's what I intend to do."

The fears that have been oppressing me during this colloquy now overwhelm me. I cannot restrain the cry of terror which breaks from me as I realise that I am to be abandoned by the dark man in this foul den and left at the mercy of the old hag whose tusk gleams so hideously

in the yellow light of the lamp. They hear my stifled cry and turn to me, she with a malicious grin upon her yellow face, he with an oath upon his lips and a frown upon his brow.

"None of that baby business here!" he growls ferociously as he sees me shrink back. "If I hear you snifle again I'll wring your neck off."

"He don' like me, does he?" croaks the old woman as she draws near to me and shakes her bony forefinger in my face. "Oh, but he's got to like me, or I'll eat 'im up — I'll eat 'im up — I'll eat 'im up."

She repeats this with such relish that I hold my breath lest some sound inadvertently escape me and impel her to carry her threat into execution forthwith. But I am saved by the entrance of a grey-haired man of sixty, or thereabouts, who bangs open the door, and staggers into the room, and shouts in stentorian tones: "W'y the hell do ye waste me money on light in the middle o' the day? Do ye think I'm a millionaire that —?"

"Shut up, dad!" says Dan. "How are you?"

The old man (he is very tall and brawny) raises his long arms to his head in a gesture of surprise, and says: "Hello, me son, I thought ye wuz dead by this time."

He lurches forward as he speaks, and I perceive that he has been drinking. He is very broad and tall, almost gigantic in height, and, as he comes forward, he brushes against his wife, who endeavours to hurry out of his way; but, ere she can do so, he pushes her aside with such a violent movement that she is flung against the wall. Then, for the first time, I observe that the tall man is not alone. He drops the end of a rope which he holds in one hand, and, as it falls to the ground, a monkey scampers into view from the dark hallway, and leaps upon the table, where he seats himself contentedly. He is dressed in a

dirty red jacket and a ragged blue skirt. The jacket is edged with gold braid; and down the front are three shining brass buttons; and upon the monkey's head is a saucy little red cap to which a blue feather is fastened with a rosette of gold braid.

"Et eats too much, damn et! an' et grows too fast. If et keeps on growin' et soon won' be no good."

"They say rum keeps children and animals small."

"Not that one, though — not that one. Besides, et won' take et if et can help et. Jus' watch et."

He draws a bottle from his pocket and gulps down half of its contents; then, approaching the table, he offers the bottle to the ape. As he draws near, the animal shrinks back as though in aversion, and crawls to the edge of the table, away from its master; but he takes it by the throat and says menacingly: "Drink!" and again: "Drink or I'll choke ye!" and, with a whimper which sounds almost human, the ape puts the bottle to his lips and takes a sip ere handing the flask back to the drunken giant.

"I can't get et te take more," says the tall man, with asperity. "Ef I on'y knowed how te keep et from growin' et'd be all right; but this way et'll soon be so big that ye can't hide et any more."

I wonder why one should seek to hide it, and what possible advantage could be gained from concealing the ape instead of exhibiting him upon the public streets; but my train of speculation is interrupted by the announcement that the scoff is ready, so I seat myself with Dan and his father at the table, and am served with a bowl of soup whose odour disgusts me, but I dare not refuse to partake of it, nor of the unsavoury vegetables which follow it. These, and some stale rye bread, constitute the meal; and when we have finished, Dan's mother seats herself upon the chair which I vacate, and joins the monkey in devouring



the remnants. She hands a rusty iron spoon to the ape, and he drinks the soup with relish, and then eats the vegetables, all the while eying me curiously, as though wondering who I am and what I am doing here. His eyes are large and bright, and (strangely enough) blue. I had often before seen little apes with jacket and cap capering about a hand organ upon the sidewalk, but never before had I encountered one with blue eyes shining out so brightly from a droll countenance framed with fur.

There is something attractive in those soft blue eyes, and something wistful in their expression as they gaze at me. Evidently I do not inspire him with fear, for he crawls across the table to where I am standing, and looks at me so wistfully, that I venture to take him in my arms. He rests his brown head upon my arm as a tired child might do, and I stroke his fur, and he closes his eyes contentedly.

“Here, you!” shouts the old woman, darting at me with her long bony fingers. I almost fall to the floor in affright; but I soon perceive that the object of her attack is not myself but the ape. She grasps the animal (he is half asleep) with both hands, takes him from me, and flings him upon the pile of rags close to the wall. He whimpers a little; but the old man snarls “Shut up, damn ye!” and turns such a ferocious look upon him that he is cowed into silence, and goes to sleep.

I sit at the table, and listen to the exploits which the three vagabonds relate as the hours pass on, and to their tales of knavery and roguery and dissipation and crime. The father’s broad form shakes with laughter as he describes his escapades; the mother’s yellow tooth gleams hideously in the light; only the son is calm and impassive as ever, smiling rarely, and yielding to no merriment. The old man declares that he is dry, and bids me get a quart of



beer an' not sit there like a dummy. The old hag hobbles to the window, bends down, and picks up from the floor a capacious tin pail which she hands me.

"Here, kid," says Dandy Dan, handing me some pennies. "Go down to the place where we were and get a quart of beer."

I leave the room, and grope my way down the stairs. It is pitch dark, and I am afraid of encountering some of the drunken villains who infest this place. On the floor above, the old Italian with the violin is still sobbing out his heart upon the quivering strings, and singing the songs that he loved to sing long ago when there was sunshine in his heart and the birds built their nests there. The children who had been crying for bread are silent now, and I surmise that they have gone to sleep; but just as I am about to pass the door, it is opened from within, and I see a man standing in the doorway, with an empty pitcher in his hand, and, at the table behind him, are his two children, quaffing two big glasses of beer, and his wife with her head resting upon the table beside her empty glass, and the man says: "I'll rush de growler (fill the beer-pitcher) again, an' den de kids kin go te bed," and he closes the door behind him, and follows me. And the children cry no longer, for though there be no bread in the house it matters not, for their stomachs are filled with beer.

I feel my way down the rickety stairs in the darkness.

Near the door I stumble over an object. It is the baby, still sleeping peacefully in the hallway, forgotten by those who brought it into the world and then left it to shift for itself.

I emerge from the hallway, and descend the cellar-steps, and open the door of the grog-shop. The room is filled with drunken tramps; and two drunken women with bloated faces are leaning against the bar and singing the

chorus of "Home, Sweet Home" as I enter. One has a harsh, raucous voice; but the voice of the other (she is not above twenty-five) is quite clear and melodious, and there is a strange hush in the room, and the drunken vagabonds listen in silence.

The bartender fills my pail at my request, and I hurry out, and again enter the huge tenement to which my evil genius has led me.

"Take some," says Dan's father, pouring out a glass of beer for me. We all drink until the pail is emptied: then the old woman declares that it is time to go to bed, and I wonder where the beds are, for I see none. But she takes half of the rags which are piled up near the window, and flings them upon the floor close to the door. Then she says: "Me an' the ole man'll doss (sleep) here, an' Dan an' the kid kin doss with The Monk." I look at Dan, half expecting him to protest vehemently against sleeping upon the pile of filthy rags with an ape; but he is evidently familiar with the ways of the household, for he says "All right," and blows out the light.

The household takes off its shoes and stockings, and then, without discarding its clothing, flings itself upon its ill-smelling bed. As the garments are scarcely less filthy than the rags whereon they repose, the household feels no repugnance to the nightly contact of its habiliments with the soiled rags which serve as bedding.

As I lie down upon my filthy bed, the hairy paw of the monkey is stretched out so that it rests upon my face. I brush it aside with aversion, and draw closer to the dark man who has flung himself upon the edge of the heap of rags. I soon fall asleep, but am awakened in the night by a sensation as of some body crawling over my face. I put up my hands quickly, and they encounter the paw of the ape; and then I perceive that it is stroking my face gently,

as though it seeks companionship in the darkness and silence of the night. My first impulse is to push it from me; but something in the soft pressure of that paw appeals to me in my loneliness, and I take it in my hand and hold it. Apparently the ape is quite content to sleep thus, for it draws its little body closer to me, and lies quite still, and falls asleep: and after a time slumber closes my eyelids also.

The night passes, and we slumber peacefully, we two — so unlike in form, in feature, in structure and in intellect — so unlike in everything save in the loneliness of our souls.

## CHAPTER VI

WHEREIN I GRATE POTATOES WITH DIRE RESULTS, AND THE  
OLD WOMAN APPLIES THE WRONG LOTION

I am awakened by the sound of voices; and, upon opening my eyes, find that Dan and his parents are up, and that the former has put on his hat and is about to leave the room. He sees that I am awake, and pauses at the door to say: "I'll be back in a day or two. You stay with the old woman and do as she tells you or it'll be the worse for you."

He looks at me with so sinister an expression upon his face that I hasten to nod my head feebly in token of assent. Then he says to his mother: "Now let's see what sort of a moocher you can make of him," and departs.

The ape is still asleep; but the old man rouses it roughly and shouts: "Git up, ye lazy toad!" whereupon it scampers quickly across the bed of rags, blinking as it does so, and rubbing its eyes.

I rise also; and the old crone prepares an unsavoury breakfast of which we all partake.

"Now, ole woman," says her husband, "w'en me an' De Monk is gone, s'pose ye grate some pertatus."

He grins as he speaks, and eyes me curiously. The face of the old woman expands into a hideous smile, and she nods her head and mumbles: "Pertatus — pertatus;" then, turning to me, she asks me whether I like potatoes, and I tell her that I do.

"Grated pertatus?" she queries, and the big tooth



which extends over her lower lip seems bigger than ever as she leers upon me.

"Yes, I like grated potatoes," I answer; and, for a moment, there flashes before me a vision of my mother preparing my dinner and then seating herself opposite to me to observe the relish with which I devour the food. And then her sweet, loving smile, and her soft, low voice —!

"He likes grated pertatus," chuckles the old crone, and then her husband chuckles, too, and they laugh as though there were something extremely humorous in my fondness for this vegetable.

Soon the old man rises, fastens the collar about the monkey's neck, attaches thereto the rope which had been discarded during the night, and walks toward the door, followed by the ape.

"So you like pertatus?" says the old woman. "Well, then, we'll git some fer ye — we'll git some fer ye."

She goes to the window across whose broken panes some rags are nailed, and thrusts her hand behind the rags. It is evident that she keeps her potatoes upon the window ledge, for when her hand reappears it clutches two of them, which she exhibits to me.

"Pertatus," she croaks, "pertatus. Nice pertatus. All fer de Newark Kid."

It is certainly kind of her to prepare potatoes especially for me, and I feel that I can best exhibit my appreciation of her kindly act by breaking my silence and conversing with her in a friendly spirit. But it is very hard for me to begin, for whenever I look at her, my eyes become fascinated by the gleam of the yellow tusk; and whenever I open my lips I feel that I am about to address not the old woman, but the old woman's tooth. Finally, however, I summon sufficient courage to open the conversation and, boylike, proceed to question her.

“Wot’s yer name?”

“Mamma,” croaks the Tooth; “Mamma Winnikin.”

I am so staggered at this answer, and it is so difficult for me to realise that a hideous old crone with a yellow tusk and a hideous countenance can really be a mamma, that, for a moment, I am struck dumb. I ruminate so long upon the difference between this mamma and my own, and eye her so fixedly, that she asks me w’y I’m lookin’ at her like that, an’ wot’s the matter.

“You don’ look like my mamma,” I proceed to explain.

“You’re awful homely, an’ you got a big tooth.”

She grins more horribly than ever, and tells me that it ain’ good fer little guys to blab too much; but my curiosity is aroused, and I proceed to satisfy it.

“Wot’s de name o’ de man — de ole man wit’ de monkey?”

“That’s Papa Winnikin. All the people calls us so. Papa Winnikin an’ Mamma Winnikin — Mamma Winnikin an’ Papa Winnikin. Oh, they all call us that.” And then the Tooth adds, as the yellow face about it wrinkles into a hideous smile: “We’re so pop’lar.”

“W’ere d’ ye git de monkey?”

The smile vanishes in an instant; and she looks at me so sharply with her small, black eyes, that I can only stare at her in wonder.

“Wot d’ ye mean?” she queries, suspiciously.

“Nothin’,” I reply. “I wuz on’y wond’rin’ w’ere ye got ’im.”

The sharp look of suspicion with which she has scrutinised me dies out of her eyes, and she appears to be vastly amused as she says: “W’ere did we git the Monk? W’y, w’ere all de monks come from. We caught ’im on Broadway — climbin’ one o’ de trees an’ spilin’ his clothes; so Papa Winnikin climbs up an’ says ‘Ye got no business te

spile yer clothes. Ye jes' come home with me.' An' he took 'im home, an' we raised 'im ever since.—An' now here's a grater. An' how'd ye like te help Mamma Winnikin grate the pertatus?"

I answer "All right," so she puts a potato in my hand, and gives me the grater, and then tells me to go ahead and grate.

"But be careful!" she admonishes me. "Ye got te be mighty careful w'en ye're gratin'. Do et like dis."

She shows me how to hold the grater in my left hand, resting it upon the table while employing my right hand in drawing the potato up and down the jagged surface of the utensil.

"Now do et yerself," she says; and I proceed to demonstrate my ability to follow her instructions. But I find it difficult to satisfy her. It appears that I do not hold the potato properly, and that I am liable to scrape my hand unless I am very careful.

"Ye're too careless," she persists in declaring, though I try my utmost to exercise care, and to follow her directions. In fact, I am extremely careful, and proceed so cautiously with my work that I make little progress.

"Ye ain' got the hang of et yet," she declares, taking the grater from me, and proceeding to do the work herself. "Ye got te do et this way."

"I did et like dat," I insist, after watching her a few moments.

"No, ye didn'; but if ye insist on doin' et, w'y do et yerself — on'y don' blame me ef ye gits hoit."

I had not insisted upon doing the work; but, as she again hands me the grater and the potato, I proceed with my task.

"Take care!" she again admonishes me.

Her reiterated warning irritates me. I know that I am



as careful as she is, and I feel that a reasonable person should be satisfied with my progress and should not discourage me. But I soon realise that she is not disposed to be reasonable or to be satisfied with what I am doing, for she tells me to stop, and, placing her bony hand upon my own, she guides the fingers which press the potato against the rough surface of the grater.

"Ye're too slow," she croaks discontentedly. "Ye got te go faster, like this." She jerks my hand up and down the indented surface with rapid movements. I am afraid of scraping my fingers which draw close to the jagged surface as the potato rapidly grows smaller; but she clutches my hand so tightly that I cannot release it.

"Don' move," she shouts excitedly, "or ye'll git hoit!"

As she utters the words, she suddenly turns my hand so that the back of it is brought into direct contact with the rough, jagged surface of the grater. A momentary heavy pressure of the hand which grasps mine, a torturing movement along the indented surface, and my shriek rings through the tenement as the skin is torn off the back of my hand.

I cry so loudly at sight of the blood which covers my hand, and at the pain of the wound, that Mamma Winnikin puts her hand over my mouth and commands me to shet up or she'll roast me alive: then, altering her tone and her manner, she clasps her hands in sorrow and murmurs sympathetically: "Pore kid! Pore kid! Ef ye'd on'y been careful like I tole yez! Ef ye'd on'y done et like Mamma Winnikin wanted yez te do et! Pore little kid! Pore kid!"

Her voice is kindly, and she lays her hand upon my head as though to stroke my hair; but I no longer trust her — I am afraid of her — so I draw away from her in repulsion,



and sob: "You done et! You done et! I seen ye do et! Ye hoited me on poipose."

The accusation seems to wound her, for she protests indignantly that it was my fault; that she had warned me repeatedly to be careful; and that if I had been careful I would not have scraped my hand. But, though she vehemently protests her innocence, I trust her no longer. It was her hand that turned my own and pressed it against the jagged surface, and all her protestations and explanations cannot check my sobs or stop the flow of blood from the torn flesh.

"I'll put some witch-hazel on yer hand, an' that'll stop the bleedin'," she murmurs, hobbling to the window. "I got a bottle here on the window-sill. Oh, et's a good bottle, et is — jes' the kind o' stuff ye wan's w'en ye hoits yerself. Et'll make the bleedin' stop, an' 'll make yez feel all right again. Then yez'll say: 'Good Mamma Winnikin! Oh, ain' she a good Mamma Winnikin!'"

The Tooth smiles at me so horribly as it says this, that I am by no means reassured. But the old crone fumbles at the rags which are nailed across the window, and thrusts her hand behind them, and then draws forth a bottle which she holds aloft triumphantly.

"Here et is!" croaks the Tooth. "Here's the stuff te make yez all right again! There's on'y two bottles o' meddersen on the winder; an' the foist bottle is witch-hazel, an' the secon' is somethin' else. An' here," concludes the Tooth, "is the foist."

It is a medium-sized bottle with no label upon it; but there is some liquid in it which gleams in the dim light somewhat as the Tooth gleams, but less malevolently.

"Stop yer cryin'," says Mamma Winnikin, "an' lemme put some witch-hazel on so's et feels better."

She picks up a strip of soiled cloth from the heap of

rag whereon I had slept the previous night, and then approaches me and directs me to hold out my hand so that she may pour the witch-hazel over it. She also brings a dish of water to the table and tells me that I can wash off the witch-hazel immediately if I don't like it. I wonder vaguely why a lotion designed to relieve the pain of a wound should be washed off immediately after its application to the tender parts; but my hand is so bloody, and the wound is so painful, that I hold forth my hand unhesitatingly to receive the soothing liquid, and, without a tremor, the old woman pours the contents of the bottle over the wound.

I do not know what it is that the villainous hag pours upon my raw and bleeding flesh to corrode and scar it. I know, however, that my flesh suddenly feels as though flames were consuming it; and my shrieks again resound through the tenement as I fall writhing to the floor.

"Et's the wrong meddersen!" she wails with affected emotion. "Et's the wrong meddersen! Oh, me pore kid! ain't et too bad!"

She raises me, though I resist her in terror; and thrusts my hand into the dish of water, thereby affording me some slight relief, though the pain is so excruciating that the shrieks burst forth involuntarily from my lips.

The door is opened from without, and some people peer into the room, attracted by my cries; and soon the hallway is thronged with ugly, frowsy beings who jostle each other in their efforts to catch a glimpse of me.

"Wot's de matteh, Mamma?" queries a burly ruffian, forcing his way into the room.

"He hoit himself, an' I got the wrong meddersen," mumbles the old woman, in surly tones.

"Oho!" shouts the man to the throng in the hallway. "Pore Mamma Winnikin got de wrong meddersen again."

This information serves to create great amusement in the hallway, for the throng laughs uproariously, and one swarthy Italian says: "She alla de time maka meestake," whereupon loud guffaws greet the speaker. But there is one in the throng who does not join in the laughter. It is a girl of about twenty, with blue eyes, and fresh, rosy cheeks.

"I'll git de cops afteh ye!" she shouts, elbowing her way through the crowd, and shaking her fist in the face of the old crone. "I'll peach (inform) on yez an' have yez pinched if yez eveh try anodder game like dat on de poor little kids dat yez pick up. Yez ort te be 'shamed o' yer-self, ye damn monkey-face, an' I'll hev yez jugged (imprisoned) ef yez don' let up wit' dat bizness."

Out in the hallway the laughter suddenly subsides. A man raises his voice and shouts "Hooray!" in approval. Another man, without any apparent cause, kicks the afore-said gentleman in the shins and sends him to the floor. The gentleman who has thus unceremoniously been dealt with, finding that both his feelings and his shins have been lacerated, rises indignantly, and proceeds to assault the aggressive individual who has attacked him. All interest in current events is immediately transferred from Mamma Winnikin to the Aggressive Individual and Shins.

The Burly Villain shouts "Soak 'im! Soak 'im!" dealing out his encouragement indiscriminately, and spurring on both contestants with exemplary impartiality.

"Sure I'll soak 'im!" cries the Aggressive Individual.

"Den do et!" shouts Shins belligerently.

The Aggressive Individual immediately accepts the invitation, and proceeds to do it. He does it rapidly, but he does it well. He belabours Shins in a manner that is cruel but satisfying. The crowd views the encounter with delight and with enthusiastic approval, and the Burly Vil-

lain's joyous iteration of "Soak 'im!" inspires the contestants to noble emulation and high achievement.

It is an encounter worthy of an audience; and even the indignant maiden with the sweet voice and the barbarous speech yields to the fascination of the glorious spectacle in the hallway, and deserts me without compunction.

The old woman closes the door upon the excited throng. I sob in agony and wish that I were dead, my pain is so intense. And, while I suffer, and cry, and moan, with no friendly face near, there is borne to my ears ever and anon the joyous shout of "Soak 'im! Soak 'im!"



## CHAPTER VII

WHEREIN I PROFIT BY THE INJURY TO MY HAND AND  
BECOME A BEGGAR

Before many days have passed I realise that I am in a den where children are maimed and crippled so that they may more readily appeal to the sympathies of the tender-hearted, when they are sent out to solicit alms upon the public street. I soon learn that New York contains numerous graduates from Mamma Winnikin's school, and sometimes they visit us, accompanied by their masters.

One evening a big, stout villain comes to us, and brings with him a boy of ten whose arm has been broken and improperly set, causing it to be bent and deformed. And Mamma Winnikin examines the arm critically (though the child starts back in terror at her touch) and the big villain tells her that she made a good job of it and that he'll always advise jockers to bring their prushuns to her for repairs.

On another evening a man comes with a boy of fifteen or sixteen who is lame. Mamma Winnikin displays her tooth in greeting, and deplores the fact that he was so careless as to fall from the window; but he retorts with an oath that he knows who pushed him, and looks so ferociously at her that his jocker roars in amusement, and cries: "Good fer you, kid! Twist her ole neck. Ha! ha! ha!"

For two days I am confined to the room, suffering indescribable agony. No effort is made to relieve my suffering. It is evident that the Winnikins measure the prospec-

tive value of my services by the appealing power of my red, burnt hand; and that a raw and festering wound is of more value than one that is dry and healed. So, on the third day, I sally forth with Papa Winnikin, and take my stand at the corner of the Bowery and Grand Street. Before I left the house, both Mamma and Papa Winnikin had instructed me how to proceed; and, as the latter had threatened me with dire punishment if I failed to follow his directions, I strive hard to obey his mandates. He takes up a position across the street, where he can watch my every movement, while I squat down upon the ground, close to the curb, and hold a tin cup in my hand, wherein alms may be deposited.

I have rehearsed my rôle and am familiar with it. I am to expose my wound (which is an angry red), and am to weep softly, as though in pain. I am not to force the attention of pedestrians upon my injured hand by flaunting it before them, nor am I to attract their attention by any loud sobs. I am to sit there modestly, weeping softly to myself, and presenting a pathetic picture of woe and dejection.

I experience but little difficulty in assuming this rôle, though I am handicapped by my inability to keep the tear ducts in constant operation. The hurrying crowds interest me, and I become so absorbed in watching them that my tears grow tired of flowing, and dry up; but I do not forget to sob at the proper intervals, or to gaze appealingly at the passers-by, and the condition of my hand arouses so much commiseration that I feel satisfied that I am presenting a very pathetic figure indeed, and one that merits commendation from the broad giant who lolls against a telegraph pole across the street, and watches me from his point of vantage.

The pennies accumulate rapidly in my tin cup; but I

empty it frequently, and transfer the coin to my pocket, lest the impulse to give be checked, at sight of the money, by a suspicion that, after all, my wants are no longer pressing. Hence it follows that, though my cup rarely contains more than half a dozen pennies, the weight in my pocket increases perceptibly as the hours go by.

At noon, Papa Winnikin comes sauntering across the street, and, as he passes me, murmurs: "Come an' git some scoff an' a swag o' booze."

I follow him to a saloon, where he pays ten cents for two big glasses of beer, whereby we become entitled to partake of the meat and cheese sandwiches displayed upon the free-lunch counter.

"Let's see yer dough," he says, lowering his voice as we sit at a table and drink our beer. I hand him the contents of my pocket, and he puts the money into his hat, and counts the coins.

"Ye're all right, kid," he says approvingly. "Let's have another drink on et. Wot'll ye have?"

I order a glass of soda water; but he insists vehemently that soda is no drink for a moocher, and that he'll see me in hell before he'll permit me to indulge in such a vile beverage, and that I must partake of either beer or whisky or go to the infernal regions forthwith: so I order another glass of beer to satisfy him. Having disposed of our dinner we resume our respective stations at the corner, I on one side of the street, and he on the opposite side, and whenever I turn my head to gaze across the way, I find him lolling against the telegraph pole, or standing close to the curb, with his hands in his pockets, and his eyes fixed upon me.

Evening comes, and we return to Mulberry Bend. The hucksters upon the street are crying their wares, the women with red and yellow shawls are haggling over the



prices of calicoes or hosiery, the dark passageway which leads to our alley is thick with night, and the alley itself sees no stars in the black patch of sky overhead. The light in the grog-shop flickers dimly; and the candles and kerosene lamps which shine through the grimy windows of the hovels and tenements are wan and sickly.

Before us looms the rear tenement which is now my home — the big, black beetle which crawls out of the ground and devours the bodies and the souls of those whom it swallows. We enter its mouth, and crawl through its dark belly, and find ourselves once more elbowing its denizens, the wretched Children of the Abyss who vegetate therein.

Again cries, and curses, and the sound of falling blows. Again the wailing of children and sobs from hungry lips. Again the oath of the drunkard, and the laugh of the reveler. And on all sides the petulant remonstrance of rebellious bodies and shattered nerves.

Papa Winnikin flings open the door of his room, and we enter. Mamma Winnikin is busy at the stove; the ape is seated upon the floor, surveying the preparations for supper; at the table is Dandy Dan, and beside him sits Red Eyes.

I am very glad to see the latter, though no greeting passes between us. I go to the ape, and pat his head; and soon Red Eyes joins me, and both of us play with the monkey, and the latter seems well pleased, and gives vent to guttural sounds of pleasure, whereat we both smile.

But there is discord at the table, for Dandy Dan insists upon an accounting of the day's receipts, and Papa Winnikin is reluctant to accede to the demand.

"He didn't batter nothin'," says Papa, lying unblushingly to his son. "He's on'y a hoosier (a verdant, unsophisticated individual) yet, an' don' know the ropes. After aw'ile he'll learn —"



"Oh, don't give me any of your ghost-stories," interrupts Dan, impatiently. "How many sinkers (dollars) did he mooch?"

"Sinkers?" repeats Papa, turning with an injured air to his spouse. "Listen to Dan talkin'. W'ere's he goin' te git sinkers, I'd like te know? W'y, he hardly got a penny all day, an' me wastin' me time watchin' 'im."

"Well, you weren't the only one wasting your time."

"Wot d'ye mean?" queries the old man, in tones wherein suspicion and alarm are commingled.

"Oh, nothing," answers Dan calmly, "except that you stood on one corner of Grand Street watching him; and I sat all day behind the fruit stand on the other corner, watching both him and you."

The hot blood rushes to the old man's face, and he leaps to his feet with a threatening gesture; but Mamma Winnikin, with a cry of alarm, grasps his upraised arm and implores him not to hit Danny — not to hit Danny — her Danny — who don' mean nothin'.

A torrent of oaths breaks from the old man's lips as he strikes her in the face and flings her aside: then, conquering himself with an effort, he resumes his seat, and glares at the imperturbable countenance of his offspring.

"Now don't get excited," advises Dan coolly, with a languid wave of his hand to emphasise the futility of all demonstrations of anger. "It doesn't pay to get excited, and I'd hate to touch you or to wind (shoot) my old man. So don't get excited, but fork over a couple of balls (dollars) and we'll call it square."

"S'elp me Gawd!" vows Papa Winnikin to his loving offspring, "I ain' got a couple o' sinkers to me name."

"Now, don't be a fool, pop, and don't take me for a fool, either. That kid took in four sinkers to-day if he took in a cent, and all I ask is half for letting you use my

prushun. So you might just as well fork it over without any fuss, and be done with it."

With angry mutterings, and with ill grace, and with many protestations of poverty, the old man flings a pile of pennies and nickels upon the table, and counts a sufficient number of coins to aggregate in value the sum demanded. Then Red Eyes is sent for a pitcher of beer, and when this is gone I am sent on a similar errand, and thus we go in turns until the night is far advanced. I am the first to succumb to the drink which Papa Winnikin insists upon sharing with every one about him; but long after I have rolled beneath the table in a drunken stupor, Red Eyes continues to ascend and descend the dark steps in his trips between the saloon and its patrons. But towards midnight he is overcome while halfway up one of the flights of stairs, and topples down to the landing on the floor below, and there he sleeps all night, with the handle of the broken pitcher in his hand.

## CHAPTER VIII

DESCRIBING WINTER AND SUMMER IN MULBERRY BEND, AND  
WHAT BEFELL THE MONKEY, AND THE STRANGE DIS-  
COVERY THAT I MAKE

It is unnecessary for me to describe in detail every step of my rapid change from an innocent and pure-hearted child, wholly ignorant of evil and of vice, and trustful of every soul, to one who trusted none, and lost all faith in human goodness, and dared no longer pray to God because God seemed so far away, and knew no masters on earth or in heaven save Danny Dan and the parents who begot the latter.

I lived in hell and grew accustomed to it. My hopes and fears were measured by my success or failure in preying upon the compassion of those to whom I appealed. A good day's receipts meant supper and beer as reward. Ill-success meant a blow of a brawny fist, and a supperless night.

So these became the states of existence which I could best comprehend and which alone seemed real to me: supper and beer, these constituted heaven: blows and starvation, these were hell. God was somewhere in the distant past. He had departed from me when my mother died, and now I was alone.

To merit heaven (which was supper and beer): this was my daily aim. I learned to weep real tears when soliciting alms. I was willing to resort to almost any expedient, howsoever reprehensible, to wring coins from the pedestrians upon the street. When my pockets were heavy my

heart was always light as I ascended the staircase of the rear tenement; but when my pockets were light, ah, how heavy was my heart as I approached the door of the room wherein Dandy Dan awaited me.

Papa Winnikin sallies forth each day with his ape; but Dan neither plies any vocation nor makes any pretence at so doing. The earnings of Red Eyes and half of my receipts belong to him, and upon these he lives. In return for the food and lodging which Papa Winnikin furnishes us, he receives the other half of my earnings.

I often meet Papa Winnikin and the monkey upon the streets, in the course of my activities as a beggar, and watch, with amusement, the antics of the little creature. He is invariably surrounded by a throng of little children who watch him with expressions of delight as he capers about in his blue shirt and red jacket whereon the brass buttons gleam in the light. He holds out his tin cup to the throng, and whenever a penny is dropped therein, he doffs his little red cap, and shakes his head until the blue feather nods and trembles.

Unlike most of the apes which I have hitherto seen disporting themselves upon the streets, he does not attempt to climb buildings, or poles, or awnings, but confines his acrobatic achievements to the ascent of barrels or boxes, whereon he clambers with agility. I often find him perched upon some barrel, and hopping and dancing about in a grotesque fashion, staring at the children with his soft blue eyes, and appearing to derive pleasure from the cries of delight which greet his capers. His tail is short, owing to the fact that most of it was evidently cut off by some devil of a man, leaving little more than a stump. What remains of it appears to be paralysed, for it seems to be devoid of sensation, and incapable of movement.

He appears to be fond of me, and loves to be taken up



in my arms. And whenever he sees me upon the street, he scampers toward me on his hind legs, and holds out his front paws in greeting, and emits divers guttural sounds which prove so highly diverting to all the children that their merry peals of laughter draw many pennies from the pockets of their parents leaning out of the windows overhead.

I have previously intimated that whenever my receipts do not equal the expectations of Papa or Danny I am punished with blows and sent supperless to bed; but my days of failure are so rare when compared with the black days which loom up so frequently in the calendar of Red Eyes, my companion, that the latter eventually comes to look upon blows and starvation as natural incidents in life from which it is impossible to escape. A night rarely passes but that the fist of Dandy Dan or the brawny arm of Papa Winnikin sends him sobbing to the floor; and every evening, at the supper table, I secrete a slice of bread in my pocket so that I may give it to my companion late at night, when we lie in bed, and the lights are out.

The months pass by. Intense as is my detestation of the unfeeling rogues who constitute the Winnikin family, I nevertheless am wanting in sufficient courage to take my fate into my own hands and fly from the accursed brood which nests in Mulberry Bend.

I am afraid to flee. I am cowed, even as Red Eyes is cowed; but unlike that unfortunate youth, I am not without hope of rescue. He belongs to Dandy Dan, but I do not.—(Thank God for that!)—Blinkey Sam is my jocker, and to him alone do I owe obedience; and Blinkey Sam is neither hard-hearted, nor cruel. He said that he would return to me; and perhaps he is back again in this big town: or, if not, perhaps he will soon return, and will search for me, and find me, and take me with him in his

wanderings so that I may feel the magic of the road, and take into my lungs the air which sweeps across the prairies and circles the world.

So I search for Blinkey Sam — not obviously but furtively. I am on the watch for him at all hours of the day. When I see a ragged figure resembling his I saunter closer to him. When I hear a voice reminding me of his tones, I turn with a start in the hope of meeting him at last. Many a time, at dusk, I have hurried after some shadowy wayfarer, half expecting to hear his familiar tones of greeting in my ears, only to feel afresh the disappointment of my hopes. And so the months pass, and bring no relief.

Yes, the months pass, and a year rolls round, and again it is fall. I have seen Mulberry Bend shivering in the cold of winter, and have witnessed the invasion of our tenement by the coroner on two occasions when women were found frozen to death in fireless rooms. I have heard children crying for the coal and the clothing which their parents could not purchase, and for warmth which none would provide; and I have seen Mulberry Bend stark, and gaunt, and white, in the grip of the pitiless snow.

There is despair in Mulberry Bend when the winter comes knocking at the doors and demands admittance. "Let me enter!" says Winter, breathing upon the gaunt bodies of those who tremble at his approach. "Let me enter!" says Winter. "I am Hunger and Cold and Despair. Let me enter!"

"Let me enter!" says Winter, as Mulberry Bend starts up in affright at his approach. "Let me enter!" says Winter, laughing derisively. "I am Hunger and Cold and Despair. Let me enter!"

But if winter be unwelcome, so, too, is summer dreaded in this charming spot; for summer spells heat, and heat spells death in happy, blessed Mulberry Bend.

The birds sing in the country while the flowers nod to the sun; but Death sings in the city as he gathers in his own.

A rich harvest has Death in Manhattan as he stalks about, gathering his sheaves; and the East Side pays him rare tribute as he takes possession of his summer residence among the poor.

For Death is democratic, and loves the poor; and when the summer comes he seeks no home along the seashore or amid the mountain's coolness, but among the poorest and the weakest, there does he make his home and, amid poverty, feast right royally.

He loves to visit the sweatshops of the East Side, and to gather in the toilers whose strength is spent. He loves to take those who live in sunless and unventilated holes, and who drop in the hot blast of the furnace which they call home. He is fond of sickly men and women, of worn-out girls who faint in the sweat-shops and the factories, of tired mothers whose breasts are dry and whose bodies are wasted, of all who gasp in vain for a breath of that fresh air which is so cheap in the country and so dear in town.

But do you know whom Death loves most as he stalks through the tenements night and day? Do you know whom he seeks most frequently as the temperature rises, and the East Side simmers and boils in the black pot wherein it steams away through the summer days? Do you know whom he fondles most tenderly and watches most solicitously, and hunts most persistently? The babies — the little children — these he loves best of all.

And when the heat of the sun flows into the tenements (the heat of the sun, but rarely its light!), and the furnace of day is open so that the babies may inhale the burning air and wither away; when mothers wash and iron so that, with their earnings, they may purchase bread, and when



the hot stove heats up the hot room until the very walls seem afire; then it is that Death is busiest of all; then it is that he takes the babies from their seat beside the glowing stove, and raises them aloft in his arms, and shouts triumphantly:

“Come, my little ones! There’s no cool breeze here, and no breath of fresh air, and no money wherewith to flee from this spot and to purchase life. For life is dear, and only death is cheap, on the East Side in the summertime.” And the little ones die.

Summer invades New York, and visits the East Side, and remains an unwelcome guest for three months. The tenements grow hotter and hotter; and finally begins the annual exodus of a heat-stricken people from the interior to the exterior of the furnace wherein they dwell. By the middle of July the East Side is encamped upon the sidewalks and in the streets.

A strange sight this! A million people abandoning their homes for the streets in the hope of catching a breath of cool air somehow, somewhere, beneath the burning heavens. They sit upon the docks — men, and women, and children — waiting for a stray breeze to lose its way across the river. They sit upon the sidewalk in the Jewish quarter — bearded men with the sad eyes of the hunted, and white mothers with careworn faces — and pray to the God of Israel to save their dying babes. They fling themselves upon the streets in the Italian quarter and implore the saints to send them relief. And in the midst of the Italian quarter simmers and stews and sweats Mulberry Bend.

The babies of Mulberry Bend are drooping like poisoned flies, and are carried out, never to return. In the tenement wherein I live, one third of the children under five die this summer; and some mothers weep and wail, and some



are dry-eyed but heart sick, and some drink beer and do not sorrow, and some laugh and rejoice that their burdens are lessened. For poverty exalts few and brutalises many.

Even the ape languishes in the heat, and comes home at night, scarcely able to lift his weary feet. He appears to lack endurance; and sometimes he totters and falls as he follows his master into the room wherein the Winnikins dwell. One night, in his sleep, he emits a cry which startles me — it is so like a human cry of suffering — and I raise myself (for I had been asleep) and peer at him through the darkness, and stroke his fur until he grows calmer, and then fall asleep again.

The summer passes, and the autumn is here, and the days are no longer hot and stifling. Mulberry Bend breathes easier again, and rejoices that summer is past. But, though the days are cooler, and the air is fresher, The Monk does not regain his former agility, nor does he perform his antics with the vim of former days. Papa Winnikin remarks the change, and eyes the little creature with anger and disfavour.

“Wot’s de matteh wit’ ye?” he growls, gnashing his teeth, and glaring at the ape who, after several fruitless attempts at climbing upon the table, sinks to the floor as though exhausted. “Wot’s de matteh wit’ dat lazy toad anyhow?” he queries, addressing Mamma Winnikin, who has placed a cup of milk beside The Monk which the latter eagerly swallows.

“Et’s lazy,” suggests Mamma, taking her cue from the form of the query addressed to her.

“Sure et’s lazy — de laziest toad I ever seen.”

“Oh, et’s a lazy monk — et’s a lazy dog — et’s a lazy toad,” she says, nodding her head and croaking like a very active toad indeed. “To hell wit’ ye!”

This latter remark is addressed to the ape, who has

drunk his milk and is holding out his tin cup for more. With a sweep of her foot she kicks the cup across the floor and sends him whimpering into a corner where he gives utterance to guttural cries of pain as he holds his right paw in his left — stroking it, and holding it as a child might hold one bruised hand in the other. His blue eyes have such a look of terror in their depths as he gazes at his tormentors that I am filled with pity for the poor, dumb creature, and wish that it were in my power to help him, and to relieve his pain: but I dare not approach him lest the cowardly pair of villains turn upon me, and belabour me, and send me supperless to bed.

Next day, in my wanderings through the streets wherein I exhibit my scarred hand and appeal for assistance, I come upon Papa Winnikin and the ape. There is a crowd of children upon the sidewalk; and, as I draw near, a woman leans out of an upper story of the house before which the children are gathered, and flings down a penny into the street.

“Git de penny, Monk,” commands Papa, and the little creature doffs his cap, and scampers into the street.

It is a narrow street, and a noisy one. The stores which border it are dark and unattractive; and above the stores are countless apartments, and from the windows women in loose waists are leaning out and gazing down at the crowds below. Wagons are clattering to and fro, and one is approaching the ape at a rapid pace as he picks up the penny and deposits it in his tin cup.

As he does so, he gazes toward the crowd upon the sidewalk, and espies me standing upon the curb and watching him. I see his eyes light up as he notices me, hear a little, guttural cry of delight break from him at sight of a friendly face, see him scamper toward me without heeding the wagon that is almost upon him, and then —

A cry of horror breaks from the children, and from my lips, too, an involuntary cry bursts forth; and the next moment Papa Winnikin is in the steet, cursing the driver, and the latter retorts: "Why the hell don't you keep your damn monkey out of the street?" and proceeds on his way. The old giant raises the little creature in his arms, cursing, and shouting imprecations upon the head of the driver, and bemoaning his ill-luck.

"I kin starve now," he cries angrily, as we wend our way homeward, followed by a curious crowd. "Wot'll I do ef De Monk croaks? Who'll s'port me now? — an' me a old man wot's got no one te look afteh 'im. Oh, but I got de tough luck fo' ye! I alwuz did hev de tough luck — I did!"

Here he turns upon the throng which follows him, and heaps such foul invectives upon their heads, that they draw back in alarm.

Fortunately we are not far from Mulberry Street; and thither we wend our way, and in a short time arrive at Mulberry Bend, and, climbing the stairs of our tenement, reach the Winnikin domicile.

"De Monk is run oveh!" shouts Papa, as he lays the inanimate figure upon a pile of rags.

"Wot's the matter?" queries Mamma Winnikin, in alarm. "Wot's the matter with et?"

He strikes her brutally in the face as he cries angrily: "Diden' I jes' tell ye, ye ole dough-face?"

She begins to whimper and to moan that it's just their luck; that they never did have any luck like other people; and concludes with the wish that God would damn its soul for getting them into trouble like that w'en they wuz alwuz so good to et.

"Take off ets clothes!" orders Papa Winnikin, and I obey.

The little creature is breathing, though it lies there so quietly and motionless that it seems lifeless. I feel such pity for it that I begin to cry, whereat the heartless wretch tells me roughly to shut up or he'll beat the life out of me; but I cannot restrain my tears, and so I weep in silence.

Then a strange thing happens. Papa Winnikin turns the little creature upon its back, and I observe a seam running along the whole length of its body, from its chin to its tail, and in the seam are cords which can be loosened. And, as I watch him in fear and wonder, he loosens the cords; and the furry body parts along the seam; and he takes off the monkey's head and the monkey's body; and, encased therein, all silent and motionless, lies the naked body of a little child.



## CHAPTER IX

WHEREIN THE MONK LEAVES THE WINNIKINS FOREVER,  
AND I FLEE TOO

A little child — a little girl of four or thereabouts — a child of stunted growth and emaciated body — a human being denied the privilege of being human.

Her cheeks are sunken; and the bones of her body (especially the ribs) stand out sharply. Her hands are very small, and her little toes — little baby toes which no fond mother ever played with or fingered lovingly — seem too fragile for the touch of any hand but that of a tender parent. And the soft touch of a mother's hand (O the pity of it! the pity of it!) she had never known in all her brief life.

Yes, here she lies, inanimate, scarcely breathing; with a cruel red line extending down her hips, where the wheel of the wagon had crushed her, rousing the driver to shout indignantly: "Why the hell don't you keep your damn monkey out of the street?" before he proceeded on his way.

Who is this child whom death is holding by the hand?

Name: The Monk — abbreviation of Monkey.

Age: Four, or thereabouts.

Height: Equal to that of an ape. Taller she must not grow lest she outgrow the ape's skin and cease to be a source of profit.

Speech: None. Perhaps she was born dumb, which would account for the guttural sounds which proceed from her in lieu of speech. Or perhaps malnutrition and maltreatment have dried up the fountains of speech.

Born: Somewhere—anywhere—nowhere. What matter?

Parents: Who knows?—who cares? They least of all.

Her whole body is so encrusted with the dirt of years that it is difficult to conjecture how she would look if she were washed. I am seized with such a fit of trembling at the shock of the discovery which I have made that I can neither think nor speak. I can only stare at the little, bruised body, and watch the pile of rags whirling round me.

Suddenly I become aware that Papa Winnikin is shouting in my ear; and the next moment I receive a blow upon the head which sends me to the floor; and then I hear the old man roaring: “How often mus’ I tell ye te git de crocus (doctor)? De Monk ’ll croak befo’ ye gits ’im, an’ who’ll s’port me den — damn ye!”

I rise to my feet, and rush out blindly. I know where the crocus lives, and who he is, and, hurrying down the stairs, I find him on the ground floor of a tenement down the alley, where he is engaged in brewing some herbs.

The crocus is not a licensed physician; but he is a manufacturer and vendor of divers medicines warranted to cure all ills, and for the sum of twenty-five cents he will prescribe for man or beast with equally gratifying results. All out of breath I rush into his dingy room and explain that somebody’s sick — at Papa Winnikin’s — and he should come at once — right away — hurry up!

He hurries after me; and we ascend the creaking steps and reach the door.

I am seized with trembling again, and cannot bring myself to enter the room, but remain without, leaning against the doorpost for support, and breathing hard.

The crocus enters the room, but leaves the door ajar.

“Wot’s de matter?” he queries.

“De kid ’s runned oveh. Take a look at ’er,” croaks Mamma Winnikin.

"Foist gimme a quarter."

Papa Winnikin, with an oath, says: "Here et is. Now take a look at 'er."

I listen in suspense, my ear pressed against the door, my body still trembling. There is a moment of silence.

"Can't do nahtin' wit' her," finally says the voice of the crocus.

"W'y not?"

"'Cause she's croaked."

Mamma Winnikin screeches: "Jis' our luck — damn 'er! An' we alwuz so good to 'er!" And Papa Winnikin curses his ill-luck and insists upon knowing who's goin' to s'port 'im now, an' he an ole man. And the crocus says it's none o' his bizness: he's got his quarter an' that's all he cares about. And I listen for no more.

For I am filled with fear. Fear of that little body that in life was an ape and in death has suddenly been transformed into a babe. Fear of those blue eyes which, when last I beheld them, were the soft eyes of a little furry creature attired in a red jacket and a blue skirt, and now are become the closed eyes of a dead child. Fear of those thin little hands which will never raise the red cap again or hold the tin cup. Fear of this mystery of life and death — this metamorphosis — so unexpected, so sudden, so strange!

I stumble down the stairs in terror, my body trembling, my legs unsteady. I fall, and tumble down a few steps, and scramble to my feet, and resume my flight.

For I must flee. Whither, I do not care, so long as it be away from this evil spot and from the heartless wretches to whom mercy and compassion are unknown.

I traverse the alley, and hurry through the dark passageway which leads to Mulberry Street, and emerge, panting, from the darkness, and then on, on, on, on, through the noisy, crowded, babbling streets.

## CHAPTER X

I REACH THE BOWERY, ENTER A LODGING HOUSE, AND  
MEET AN OLD FRIEND

I am brought to a standstill by bumping into a youth with lowering countenance and aggressive mien, who grips me by the shoulders and insists upon knowing w'ere t'ell I'm runnin' to, anyhow?

I don't know, and forthwith inform him of the fact; but my reply fails to mollify him. Another youth (also with lowering countenance) advises him not to take any of my guff but to forthwith open hostilities by converting my countenance into jelly, or paste.

As I gaze about me helplessly (for my opponent is much bigger and stronger than I) my eyes light upon a policeman who is close at hand. I feel now that I am saved from an assault, for the officer observes us, and I know that he will not permit the belligerent youth to attack me.

"I'll tell de bull," I say, with renewed courage.

He glances up, and observes the officer; and then unhesitatingly pounds me in the face with his fist and sends me to the ground.

"Here you!" shouts the officer, addressing me.  
"Wot's de matter?"

"Hello, Dan!" says the youth.

"Hello, Jim!" says the officer.

"Did che see 'im try te maul me?" pursues the youth.

"Sure," replies the officer, taking me by the collar, and dragging me to my feet. "Now looka here, ye bum, ye!"



he continues, fixing me with his indignant eyes; "don't t'ink dat ye kin use de Bowery as a scrappin'-place w'en I'm around, or"—here he raises his stick threateningly—"I'll knock yer head off."

I protest that I didn' do nahtin'; that I didn' even git a chanct te slug the other fellow; that he hit me foist—and much more to the same effect; but the policeman is so impressed with my guilt that he impresses me also, and I wonder, hazily, whether I may not have been a culprit after all.

But I am not permitted to meditate long, for the officer orders me sharply to move on or he'll pinch me; whereat I realise that I am not to be arrested, but am privileged to pursue my way, which I proceed to do with a sense of relief at my escape from the clutches of the law.

I have had no supper, and am feeling very hungry. The receipts of the day, aggregating a dollar and a half, are in my pocket, so I enter a saloon which is so small that it seems to be merely a hole in the wall, and purchase a glass of beer, which entitles me to a free lunch of bread and putrid bologna and corned beef. There are several sailors at the bar, and their uniform awakens my admiration. I wonder vaguely whether they would take me with them if I were to offer my services, and I feel a sudden yearning for the fresh sea air, so different from the foul stench of the Bend, and picture to myself the clean decks where one need not sleep upon piles of ill-smelling rags, nor pass the day a wanderer amid alien streets.

I am almost on the point of addressing them when a barefoot boy of about fourteen enters and fumbles in his pocket for money. He is attired in such tattered clothes, and looks so weary, that I am moved to treat him to a glass of beer, which he accepts gratefully. He devours the lunch voraciously, as one who is starved, and confides

to me that he ran away from his home at Scranton because he was tired of school, and that he is hunting for work in New York but finds it difficult to obtain. He adds hopefully, but with a wistful smile which belies his words, that he guesses it'll be all right though, after a while.

I remain in the saloon for an hour, and then I go out once more into the street. The stores are lighted, and the saloons are beginning to become crowded, as is ever the case at night; and overhead the elevated trains are rushing and rumbling, and shaking the iron trestles which stand out gaunt, and bare, and ugly in the gloom.

I enter a dime museum and see a gentleman who is all bones and no fat, and who is introduced to the audience as the original living skeleton; and a corpulent lady who is all fat and no bones, and who invites the audience to purchase a picture of herself for ten cents; and a coloured lady with a little head, who answers to the title of the Queen of Wild Borneo (though she wears neither crown, nor jewels, nor silks, nor the magnificent attire befitting her royal station) and who was captured after a desperate encounter (illustrated on canvas at the entrance to the museum) wherein a score of her followers were captured, and were subsequently conveyed in irons to this country, where they languish in captivity on the Bowery or at Coney Island. There is also a youth there who is introduced as the Dog-Faced Boy, but I fail to discern in his features any resemblance to a dog, and I am doubly disappointed when I hear him cough like a human being, and am forced to conclude that he cannot even bark.

The night is now far advanced, and midnight is approaching, and I know not where to go. I am tired and sleepy, and am about to slink into a dark hallway in the hope of sleeping there undisturbed, when I am attracted

by a signboard swinging from the second story of an old, greasy wooden building, on which is painted in big white letters illuminated by electric light the announcement that comfortable beds for a night can be procured for seven cents.

I enter the hallway with a sigh of relief, and stumble up the dimly lit stairway, and open a door on which the following words are painted in straggling letters:

WORKINGMEN'S HOTEL  
ROOM WITH BED SEVEN CENTS

As I stand timidly in the doorway, with the knob in my hand, a gruff voice commands me to git in or git out and don' be all night about et, needer. I decide to git in, and, closing the door behind me, find myself in a long, gloomy room extending the entire length of the building. There is a sound in the room as of the creaking of boards, and occasionally the sound of a hand coming in violent contact with the wall, as some sleeper moves restlessly; but the sound which dominates all others is the deep breathing and loud snoring of scores of men, lying outstretched upon the bunks which line the room.

There is a narrow aisle running through the centre of the room, and at each side of the aisle there are, at intervals of a dozen feet, heavy wooden posts extending from floor to ceiling. There are wooden beams nailed to these posts and bordering the aisle — or, rather, two tiers of beams, one two feet from the floor, and the other three feet above the former, and to these beams the beds are fastened.

Beds — call them that if you will — or, rather, bunks. But such bunks!

Strips of canvas fastened with ropes to the rough



beams, and each strip just wide enough to support one human derelict, provided he stir not restlessly in his sleep. They are so close together that if a sleeper stretch out his arm, his hand will come in contact with his neighbour's head.

No bedding, no pillows, no clean linen.

The Derelicts have taken off their shoes and stockings, and have placed them upon the floor, beneath the bunks. They have also divested themselves of their coats and vests, and have rolled them up so that they may serve as pillows for their heads to rest upon.

The air is so thick with foul odours that a delicate stomach would grow nauseated in it; but the nights spent in slumber upon the heap of rags in the home of the Winnikins has accustomed my olfactory nerves to fetid odours, and my stomach does not rebel as I enter the room. Close to the door there is a little office partitioned off from the sleeping quarters, and in the partition a narrow aperture has been cut, and between the aperture and the entrance to the lodging house stands The Boss or guard.

He is tall, and broad, and muscular. When differences arise between guests, it becomes the duty of The Boss to restore order. This he accomplishes by tapping the offenders kindly upon the eye or nose ere escorting them courteously to the door, where he hospitably extends his foot in a touching effort at expediting their descent.

The voice of The Boss is harsh and gruff, but the English which drops from his lips is adorned with choice metaphors. For flowers of speech are the only flowers that bloom on the Bowery, and these grow in such profusion (even in the darkest nooks and the dingiest rookeries) that the residents of that favoured street cull them with easy gestures, and wear them with swaggering distinction.



"Say, sporty," says The Boss; "cough up yer gum-drops an' pass 'em to de guy in de coffin."

This delicate invitation to deposit the cost of a lodging with a pallid man who sits in the office and peers at me through the aperture before noted, leads me forthwith to pay the requisite sum, whereupon The Boss directs me to follow him to my bunk.

"Keep yer eyes peeled," he admonishes me, as he kicks aside a pair of shoes which encroaches upon the aisle, "o' yez'll flop oveh some o' dem boats. Heah you!"

This latter exclamation is occasioned by the inconsiderate conduct of one of the guests who, in his sleep, has stretched out his arm at full length, thereby coming in contact with a nose of peculiar ruddiness and sensitiveness adorning the countenance of a slumbering Derelict, and rousing the latter from his innocent slumber, whereupon there result summary reprisals of a violent nature.

"Heah, youse ducks!" cries The Boss, descending upon his two irate patrons. "Ef youse don' muzzle yer mugs and paralyse yer fists, I'll sweep up de floor wit' bote o' yez."

"He hit me nose," remonstrates one of the combatants.

"Well, trim yer bugle nex' time, an' shut yer face; an' if eeder of yez opens yer trap ag'in I'll drop on yez heavy. See?"

We pass on, and finally halt at the extreme end of the aisle before two bunks. The light is so dim here that I can scarcely distinguish the strips of canvas in the semi-gloom; but I finally perceive that the lower bunk is occupied, and that the upper one is empty.

Taking off my coat and vest, I roll them into a pillow; then, drawing off my shoes and socks, I leave these upon the floor, and crawl into my bunk.

I am so tired that I soon fall asleep; but my slumber is

disturbed by dreams through which Blinkey Sam races, ever pursued by me. I strive to grasp him, to tell him how eager I am to go with him and to escape from Mamma Winnikin, who is pursuing me with a big, sharp tooth held in her right hand like a knife; but he will not listen to me. And finally, when I still follow him, he turns suddenly, and flings me over an embankment, and I fall down, down, down —

I open my eyes to find that I have indeed fallen down, and that I have somehow landed in the lower bunk upon the outstretched arm of its occupant, and that he has me by the throat and, with his disengaged hand, is choking me; and then I suddenly realise that there is something familiar in the oaths which break from him, something familiar in the sound of his voice; and, breaking from his grasp, I drop to the floor, and then raise myself, and bend over him, and gasp joyously:

“Blinkey Sam!”

“W’y, et’s de Newark Kid!” he exclaims in glad surprise. “I’ve been lookin’ fo’ yez. W’ere t’ell ’ve ye been all dis time?”

**BOOK III**  
**ON THE ROAD**





## CHAPTER I

PICTURES OF THE ROAD: HOW A KING OF THE ROAD PROCURES A MEAL, AND HOW I WITNESS A FATAL ENCOUNTER IN A DIVE

The life that I now enter upon is the life of the hobo on the road — a colorful life, full of pleasures such as are reserved for the vagabond unshackled by conventions, and of hardships such as try the endurance of the strongest and the most courageous.

But while I am on the road I am out of the city's abyss, and that thought in itself suffices to set my heart asinging.

I am free! — a vagabond, it is true, but a free man. The streets of New York are far away, and the horrors of the great, cruel city no longer oppress me; and now I may breathe the pure, untainted air which sweeps through the humble hamlet but avoids the big town.

I think that I can best describe the life which I lead for the next half dozen years by selecting characteristic scenes and incidents of my travels, and presenting them in a series of pictures to my readers; and this method I purpose to adopt in order that this period of my moral degeneration may be dealt with as briefly as is consistent with a proper presentation of my experiences and their effect upon my development.

"Dis is de life fer me," says Blinkey Sam. "Nahtin' te worry about: nahtin' te distoib one: no bizness te t'ink about: no woik te do: jes' loafin' about an' seein' de woild. Dat's wot I calls livin'."

We are sauntering along a country road in a little town

in the state of Ohio. There are trees bordering both sides of the road; and a thousand birds are singing the songs which the wanderer loves to hear.

And kings we are — Kings of the Road, Royal Vagabonds, with the trees and the birds as our subjects, and the wide, wide world as our dominion; and when we exact tribute at the house-door, we but exercise our royal prerogatives and demand our due.

"Yes," says Blinkey Sam, resuming the thread of his discourse, "gimme de free life o' de hobo, an' keep yer millions."

I acquiesce in the sentiment. All the millions that I posses I shall undoubtedly keep, especially as my millions consist at that moment of a ragged suit of clothes and eleven cents.

At the junction of three roads we part, agreeing to meet at dusk on the outskirts of the town.

I enter the first gate to which I come, and walk up a wooden path, and knock at the back door of a farmhouse.

"Come in," says a gruff voice.

I am disappointed. I had hoped that the farmer would be at work in the fields, and that my appeal would be directed to the ears of his more timorous and warmer hearted wife. It is immaterial to me whether I inspire fear or sympathy. I am hungry, and must have a meal. A "poke-out" handed to me at the back door — a slice of buttered bread, or a sandwich, and possibly a cup of coffee — would be thrice welcome, and would refresh me, and fill my soul with music. I have found the stumps of two cigars (one but half-smoked) in the road, and I picture to myself the joys of a calm smoke after a good meal.

I open the door of the farmhouse and find my worst fears confirmed. The farmer is the sole occupant of the room. Worse still, he is sour-faced and surly.

A glance at his countenance satisfies me of the futility of appealing to his sympathies by describing my forlorn condition owing to the early death of my mother in a train-wreck, and the recent demise of my father on the operating-table of a hospital.

"I'm lookin' fer woik," I begin, instead. "I'm out o' woik, an' I'm lookin' fer a job. I'm willin' to do anyt'ing s' long as I kin oin sometin'."

As a matter of fact, work is the one thing that I am not looking for. My association with tramps, and my familiarity with their philosophy, has bred in me a hatred and disgust for labor in any form whatsoever. For the one thing that the hobo detests above aught else is work. To labor for another implies dependence, the shackling of the wanderer's free will, the sacrifice of all the mean ideals which the vagabond prizes as his natural heritage.

But it is late in the fall, and I know that the farmer's crop has been harvested; and I therefore feel reasonably certain that I may offer my services without fear of having such offer accepted.

"Work, eh?" grunts the farmer suspiciously. "Well, I've got some wood to chop, and you might start in with that."

"All right," I say eagerly. "Dat's jes' wot I'm lookin' for."

I have observed the big pile of wood, neatly split and stored away in the back yard, and I know that he requires no more fuel. He is merely testing my sincerity. Hence my apparent eagerness to proceed forthwith to sweat and labor at his behest.

"You can get to work right away," he assures me.

"All right," I cry with alacrity; "de soonah de betteh."

I wait for this acquiescence to sink into his consciousness — wait for him to reconsider his proposal, to confess that

he has no employment for me, and to condone for his unjust suspicions by offering me a plenteous repast.

But he does none of these. Instead, he leads me to the rear of the house, a short distance from where the pile of split pine had previously engaged my attention, and there, to my chagrin, I behold something which had hitherto escaped my observation — another woodpile, a towering mass, with layer upon layer of unsplit pine stumps all ready to be cut up, sawed up, chopped up — a herculean task, at which the hobo's soul within me revolts in indignation.

"Now get to work," commands the unsympathetic wretch, handing me an axe.

I take the implement in my hand with feigned cheerfulness of spirit, raise it, and then drop it weakly to the ground.

"What's the matter?"

"I'm hungry. I didn't eat nahtin' since yeste'day mornin'. Gimme a bite to eat foist, an' I'll split et all ef ye wan's me to."

He looks at me dubiously, his suspicions not yet lulled to rest; but there is such a ring of sincerity in my voice (for Blinkey Sam is an excellent tutor, and I have been an apt pupil) that, after hesitating a moment, he enters the house, and soon returns with a cold meat sandwich and a cup of coffee.

"Now hurry up and get to work," he says gruffly, as he prepares to re-enter his house, "and I'll come back in a little while and see what you've done."

But I do not wait for him to return. I eat my sandwich, drink my coffee, and then, without a word of farewell to the deserted woodpile, hurry out of the front gate and into the highway.

. . . . .



Denver, Colorado.

A low, stale-beer dive, where the lowest of the Children of the Abyss congregate.

Two cents for a glass of beer and a "spot" on the floor whereon to sleep.

My companion and I have drunk our beer, and have selected our sleeping place amid a score of other outcasts who lie outstretched upon the dirty floor.

"Now fer a doss (sleep)," says Blinkey Sam, yawning. "Pound yer ear well."

It is the hobo's good-night that he addresses to me. I stretch out my tired frame upon the hard boards and soon fall asleep.

An hour later I am awakened by the sound of voices raised in angry controversy.

A short, blonde vagabond of thirty, or thereabouts, has entered the dive, paid his two cents, drunk his beer, but has found no unoccupied place upon the floor whereon to sleep.

To my right lies my jocker; to my left lies a tall, angular individual known as Butts. The latter lies upon his back, with both arms extended; so the newcomer unceremoniously rouses him by kicking him in the shins and insisting that he lie upon his side and make room for the stranger.

I am aroused by the altercation that ensues as Butts, refusing to change his position, hurls imprecations upon the head of the vagabond who has disturbed his slumber.

But the newcomer is in an ugly mood, and, being heated by the liquor which he has imbibed in other dives, is indisposed to parley. Another kick from his heavy shoes draws forth a howl of pain from the man whom he has assaulted, and the next instant Butts is on his feet, and has his assailant by the throat.

What follows turns my blood cold, and keeps me awake

for many nights to come; for suddenly the newcomer puts his hand to his pocket, and the next instant I see the glint of a razor in the dim light, and then I hear a gasp and a gurgle, and the sound of a dying man's body striking the floor, and then —

“Skip befo' de bulls come!” shouts Blinkey Sam warningly in my ear.

The lights in the dive are suddenly extinguished. We rush to the door, fling it open, and hurry out. After us come thronging the other vagabonds.

And only one remains behind, silent, motionless, dead.

## CHAPTER II

### A GIRL NAMED CURLS

Her name is Curls. She is about eighteen years of age, and has been on the road for two years. The boy who lured her from her home deserted her three months after he had wrecked her life, and she never had the courage to return to her home or to communicate with her broken-hearted parents.

She is alone in the world, and knows that she is alone. She is an outcast, and feels that she is lost. Looking at life through the grey glasses of disillusionment, she knows that its colors are drab, and that the sun will never shine into her heart again.

She does not care. She has drunk the cup of sin and the drink was poison, but its taste was sweet. Now the sweetness is all gone, but the poison remains in her veins.

Though she is little more than a child her heart is grown old and hardened, and her laugh — the laugh of one who has torn the veil from the pitiless face of Truth, and has been stricken dumb with terror and despair — is a bitter laugh, and thrice bitter because it comes from the lips of a child. It is the laugh of a woman grown old before her time — the laugh of the Woman Who Knows. She is a Child of the Abyss, and dwells with the Children of Gloom.

I meet her at an isolated way-station in southern Canada. I had parted from Blinkey Sam at Buffalo after we had agreed to meet three months later at Santa Fe, and had crossed over to the Canadian shore. At Toronto I had

boarded a freight train, but had been discovered by a brakeman and unceremoniously "ditched" before I had ridden a hundred miles.

Now, it is not pleasant for a hobo to find himself ejected from a train at a place where nothing is in sight but a tiny freight-station and one huge manufacturing plant. There are no "poke-outs" or "set-downs" to be procured in factories, and to a cold and unsympathetic business man it is immaterial whether the hobo's parents died of consumption or of liver complaint, whether the tramp has been straining his eyesight for one month or for ten months in a search for employment, and whether he is just about to enter a hospital to submit to an operation, or whether he has just emerged from such an institution in an unstrung and debilitated condition.

So I linger about the station, and wait for the train which is due in five hours, and, waiting thus, I meet her.

"Hello, 'Bo!" she says by way of greeting.

"Hello."

"Ditched?"

"Yep."

"Me too. Been here two hours. I tried to flip a ride on your train, but the shack (brakeman) was horstile."

"Did you have any scoff?"

"No, you?"

"No. Don' know w'ere to batter."

"Let's try that," indicating the factory.

"Dey won' help no 'boes," I assert, with a dubious glance at the huge one-story pile of brick.

"We can tackle the workmen in the dinner hour."

It is almost noon now. In a short time the factory whistles blow, and then some of the workmen emerge from the entrance with their dinner pails in their hands, and fling themselves upon the ground, and proceed to eat their



meals leisurely, while the majority of their fellow-workmen remain within.

We approach a group of laborers, and accost them meekly.

"Won't you please let us have some grub?" my companion says pleadingly. "We're hungry."

"W'ere do you come from?" queries a black-bearded man as he gazes curiously at my companion.

"From the States."

"Been hitting the road?"

"Yes."

"Better go back home. That's no sort of life for a girl."

He takes a meat sandwich from his dinner pail, and hands it to her; and some of the other men share their lunch with us, and in this way we soon satisfy our hunger.

"Gee! but dey was easy," I exclaim smilingly, as we trudge back to the station.

"I never have no trouble gettin' scoff or dough," she says with some pride. "What's your monica?"

"Newark Kid."

"Mine's Curls."

We shake hands in a friendly fashion, and return to the station where we learn, to our dismay, that the next train to stop is due the following morning at ten o'clock.

"Hully gee!" I ejaculate.

"Ain't that the tough luck!" exclaims my companion.

I gaze across the green plains to where thin spirals of smoke curl upward from numerous chimneys fully five miles away, and suggest that we walk to the distant town and get our supper. She agrees, but thinks that we should follow the railroad tracks and remain on the lookout for the watertank which will probably be not far distant.

For the watertank, be it known, is the tramp's bulletin-

board. Here he records his impressions: here he scrawls notices of warning: here he scribbles messages to his brethren of the road: and here, too, at the watertank, the hoboos congregate for their evening scoff, and are drawn to it when they select their hangout for the night, and prefer to sleep in the open rather than in the "doss-houses," where the air is heavy with fetid odors.

We walk along the railroad ties and, after a time, come to the watertank which we have been seeking. Most of the writing thereon has been almost obliterated by the action of the elements; but there are some words scrawled in chalk which have evidently been jotted down quite recently, for the letters are clear and distinct, and stand out boldly from the blurred conglomeration of letters and figures which straggle over the boards.

1. "Mark near station — big white house with green shutters."

2. "Battering for light pieces good in the main-stem."

3. "Railroad shack good for kipping."

4. "Bulls hostile. Beware of zebras."

Evidently the hobo who wrote this was possessed of a fair education which enabled him to spell correctly and to write legibly. I experience no difficulty in deciphering the messages or in comprehending their import.

1. Near the station there is a white house with green shutters whose owner receives beggars kindly.

2. To beg for money in the main street would prove profitable.

3. One may sleep undisturbed in the railroad shack.

4. The police are hostile; and hoboos convicted of vagrancy must wear the striped uniform of convicts.

"Well," I say, "we kin drill on the railroad till we git to dat burg, an' den we kin t'row our feet fer swag an' scoff."

"I'm afraid it'll rain," says Curls, with a disappointed air. "It's gettin' cloudy."

Yes, it is getting cloudy. The sun has vanished, and the dark storm-clouds are scudding across the sky, laden with rain. The wind has risen, and is whistling in our ears; and in its midst are thick clouds of dust which envelop us and make us blink.

"Hurry up!" shouts my companion above the din of the wind. "Hurry, or we'll get wet."

Even as she speaks, the first drops of rain strike our faces.

"Let's run. Gimme your hand."

I put my hand in hers, and we run across the railroad ties at the top of our speed. Her hand is not plump, but is soft, nevertheless, and its warm touch thrills me.

I am fifteen and she is eighteen; and in the years which have passed since my mother's death I have never felt the touch of a woman's hand until this day. I laugh aloud as we hurry along, and she laughs also, and we do not mind the dust, nor the wind, nor the rain.

And soon the dust subsides, and the wind grows calmer; but the rain does not abate in violence. Rather does it exult as it beats in our faces and whirls about us — as it strikes our cheeks, and drenches our clothes, and soaks our shoes — as it moistens our lips and wets our hands, and gathers upon our eyelashes — and as it exults, we catch its spirit, and when my companion breaks into the opening bars of a popular song I join her in the chorus, and our voices rise above the whistling wind and the pattering rain.

"Dere's de railroad shack!" I cry joyously, as I see a one-story wooden building a short distance ahead, close to the tracks. The shack is unpainted, and its door is open and creaks as the wind shakes it and the rain batters its sides; but it offers us shelter, and so we welcome it

gladly, and seat ourselves upon the floor (for the shack is unfurnished) and exchange reminiscences.

The day passes, and night comes, and there is no diminution in the downpour of rain. We have had nothing to eat since noon, but resign ourselves to the prospect of dispensing with any meal until we shall procure a "poke-out" or "set-down" in the morning.

"It ain't so bad in here," Curls murmurs, with a little sigh of relief and comfort, as we sit upon the bare floor and listen to the patter of the rain upon the tin roof.

"No," I acquiesce; "it's nice."

I am holding her hand and am wondering why it is so much softer and warmer than my own, and why its touch fills me with a strange sensation of happiness.

"Do you like to hold my hand?" she queries.

"Yeh," I answer faintly, fearing that she will withdraw it.

"So do I"; adding, after a moment: "I like ye."

"I like you too," I murmur.

"Do you?"

"Yeh."

The confession comes from me hesitatingly. For the first time in my life a girl's hand rests unreluctantly in my own; and for the first time since my childhood a girl addresses me without patronage and without aversion.

More than that: she confesses that she likes me — *me*, the Newark Kid, the dirty, unwashed, unkempt youthful vagabond, at whose approach women have hitherto instinctively shrunk back in fear. I resolve that hereafter I shall wash my face every morning.

"Ye're awful nice," she says, and I feel her arm resting on my shoulder.

"Aw, g'wan!"



"Sure you are."

"G'wan."

"Don't ye like me?"

"Sure I likes ye," I cry with trembling voice, putting my arm about her.

She seems surprised at my emotion and, for a time, remains silent.

"I likes ye awful much," I finally murmur.

"Do ye?"

"Yeh. Do ye like me sure?"

"Sure." Her head sinks upon my shoulder.

"Den gimme a kiss."

She puts her lips to mine, and I kiss her, and find a kiss to be good to the taste.

"Is ye got anodder to spare?"

"What?"

"A kiss."

"Oh, ain't ye funny!" she says, with a laugh. "Why don' ye take it?"

The query is pertinent. Moreover, the suggestion is admirable. And the invitation in her voice is irresistible. I proceed to take it.

"You're a regular kissing-bug." This from Curls.

"I likes et."

"Do you?"

"Yeh."

"So do I. Do you love me?"

"Love ye?" I tighten the clasp of my arm about her waist, and press my cheek closer to hers. "Love ye? You jis' bet I do!"

She sighs contentedly as she kisses me.

"It's so nice to be loved," she says softly. "Let's travel together."

Six weeks pass.

I have been very happy in the companionship of Curls, and have been the envy of the other hoboes whom I have encountered, at divers times, on the road. Curls has been faithful to me, notwithstanding the advances of others, and has been quite content to share with me the hardships of the road.

We are sitting upon the bare floor of an empty box car into which we have climbed unobserved, and are travelling through the State of Indiana. The door of the car is slid back sufficiently to enable us to peer out at the passing scenery, and to feel the warmth of the sunlight which steals through the opening and rests upon our faces.

“Wot was de name of de guy wot runned away wit’ ye f’om home?” I query suddenly. It will be observed that my diction has not improved during the years of my wanderings, and that my command of English is as imperfect as it was in my early boyhood days. If anything, it has grown more rugged and uncouth with the advancing years, due to my association with hordes of uncouth and illiterate beings, whose language, like their meals, has been picked up in the slums and the byways of life.

“Wot wuz his name?” I repeat, for Curls does not answer immediately.

“Sporty Jim.”

The monica is distasteful to me. It suggests a cavalier of the road leading a gay life in a debonair manner — one of those individuals so fascinating to the impressionable heart of a girl — and something akin to jealousy smites me at the vision which the monica conjures up.

“D’ye like ’im yet?”

She pauses a moment, and then says firmly: “No.”

The pause affects me disagreeably. I peer into her eyes and mutter doggedly: “Ye like ’im.”

"No, I don't."

"Sure?"

"Sure. I hate him."

"I don' b'lieve it. Ye're givin' me a ghost story."

She looks at me in surprise, then laughs into my eyes and cries: "What t'ell 's the matter with ye, kid? Are ye jealous?"

"No."

"Then gimme a kiss."

She flings her arms about me, and presses her lips to mine. And I kiss her.

It is at a way-station near Denver that I meet him. He comes in on a freight car, accompanied by another hobo, and both leap off just before the train comes to a stop. His appearance belies his monica. His clothes are stained with dirt, his face is unshaven, and his derby hat is broken; but his face is pleasant and attractive, and his eyes are roguish and merry.

My companion, who has watched the approach of the train listlessly, suddenly clutches my arm and says: "Let's move on."

I am surprised at her action, and more so at the agitation in her voice.

"Wot's up?" I query.

"Nothin'. Come on."

I follow her as she hurries along, and wonder why she is so agitated, and why her steps are so hurried, and why her hand trembles as it clutches my arm. And not only her hand but her face is strangely agitated, and the pallor of her cheeks is in sharp contrast with her large black eyes.

"Wot's de matteh?"

"Nothin'."

There are steps behind us. I turn my head and perceive

that the two vagabonds are following us, and that they are close at hand.

"Wait a minute," I say to Curls, and then I stop and turn to meet them.

"Wot d' ye want?" I inquire gruffly.

"Hello, Curls!" says he of the pleasant face, affably.

"Hello," rejoins my companion faintly.

"Who are ye?" I query, with sinking heart.

"Sporty Jim. An' who're you?"

"None o' yer business."

He eyes me reflectively, and suggests that if I get too fresh I may get my block knocked off some of these days. I dare him to do it; but, with a contemptuous sniff, he advises me to cool down — cool down, young feller — cool down.

I do not cool down. I am itching for a pretext to fly at him, and to strike him, and to bruise those laughing lips. He is fully six years older than I am, but I do not consider the disparity in our ages, nor his superior physical development: I only know that I am standing face to face with my rival, and that I hate him.

"Shake, old girl," he says, extending his hand to Curls. "Haven't seen ye fer such a long time dat —"

He gets no further. I strike down his outstretched hand with a blow of my fist, and the next moment we are grappling together.

He strives to fling me to the ground; but I trip him, and we go down together. We roll round, each seeking to pin down the other beneath him, and suddenly I realise that he is on top, and that my arms are pinioned to the ground, and that, with his right fist, which is disengaged, he is about to strike me in the face. And at that moment the other vagabond, strangely enough, comes to my rescue.

"Drop et, Jim," he cries; and, as he speaks, he grasps



Jim under the arms and pulls him backward, notwithstanding my antagonist's struggles to release himself.

"Quit et, both o' ye, an' slope (run away)! Wot t'ell ah yez sluggin' each oddeh fer? Yez look putty spiked (upset), an' all about nothin'. Cheese et!"

"I will, if this bloke'll cool down," says Jim. "Wot d'ye say?" This last query is addressed to me. I growl, "Git off o' me," and, accepting this as an implied admission of defeat, he releases his hold of me, and rises.

There is something so genial in his manner as he regains his feet and turns to Curls with a merry smile, that I feel strongly tempted to renew hostilities in order to vindicate myself in her eyes. For I realize that my defeat has been inglorious, and that I have suffered in her esteem. But my rival gives me no pretext for a renewal of the combat. On the contrary, he assures Curls that I am a blowed-in-the-glass guy all right, and that I'll be able to wipe the floor with him when I'm a year or two older: and, before I am fully aware of it, my ire has vanished, and I surrender to his charm of manner, and accept his proffered hand, and admit that I have been too hasty in attacking him.

But there is something within me which does not disappear so quickly as my anger, and that is the pain which grows within my heart as I observe Curls yielding, despite herself, to the fascination of the two vagabonds. For there is something in their manner which is irresistibly attractive — something cheery and breezy and gay — as though, from childhood to manhood, they had played only with the iridescent froth of life without ever stirring its murky depths.

Jim's companion is named Dick — a strong, muscular youth with blonde hair and blue eyes and pink cheeks like a girl's. He is acquainted with Curls, having met her on the road in the days when she and Sporty Jim ate the

fruit of the Tree of Knowledge together, ere Eden closed its gates.

"Let's get some grub," says Dick. "I'll flicker (faint) if I don' get some scoff."

"Who'll go over there?" queries Jim, pointing to the only house in the vicinity — a small, yellow structure with green shutters, which stands facing the railroad tracks; and then he adds casually: "S'pose Curls an' I go over there an'—"

"Neveh mind," I say curtly. "I'll go over wit' 'er an' bring back a hand-out."

"All right," he says, hiding his discomfiture beneath a smile. "Dick an' me'll wait fer yez."

Accompanied by Curls, I approach the house and knock at the door, which is opened by an old lady in faded black. I inform her that my father has recently died, and that my sister and I have relatives in Denver who have promised to secure employment for us upon our arrival, and that we have been walking along the railroad tracks since early morning and have not yet had any food. The old lady bids us wait while she goes within; but she soon returns with a large paper parcel, and when we open it we find a dozen roast-beef sandwiches and two big portions of pie, which we share with our acquaintances upon rejoining them.

After finishing our repast, we take up our journey to Denver. I walk with Jim in order to divert his attention from Curls, and to prevent him from passing more than a casual remark to her now and then, while she walks on ahead with Dick. By the time that we reach Denver it is dusk, and the passenger cars at the station are gleaming with lights.

"Dere's a blind-baggage goin' out on the seven-t'irty," says Jim. "Will yez take et?"

"No," I answer curtly.

"Say, Dick," he shouts to his friend, who is walking a few yards in advance, "should we take the seven-t'irty?"

"Not fer me," answers the other. "There's a freight at eight-fifteen that's good enough fer me."

"All right," says Jim cheerily. "We'll make the eight-fifteen."

"Curls an' me is goin' to stay a week or two in Denver, an' den push west," I inform my companion. "W'ere ye goin'?"

"Buffalo. I'm sick o' the West, an' wan' to get to York as soon as I kin."

At the station we separate. Jim and Dick decide to wait for the eight-fifteen, while Curls and I proceed to seek our supper in the streets of Denver. I select a street filled with small, modest dwellings wherein supper is in course of preparation; and, as my companion chooses the easterly side of the thoroughfare for her operations, I take the westerly side for mine.

I am singularly fortunate this evening, for in the first house which I enter I am invited to a "set-down," and am permitted to eat my meal in the kitchen while the mistress of the house herself waits upon me and replenishes my plate.

When I return to the street, I stroll along leisurely in search of Curls, but fail to meet her. She is evidently partaking of a meal in some house, or has been content with a "hand-out," and has proceeded to the street corner opposite the station, where I had agreed to meet her. I retrace my steps, but do not find her at the appointed place, so I take from my pocket the stump of a cigar (designated in Hoboland as "a snipe") which I have found upon the sidewalk, and proceed to light it.

I have been smoking but a short time when I see a familiar figure approaching leisurely. It is Sporty Jim, and he is alone.

"W'ere's Dick?" I query, noting the absence of his comrade.

"He's gone," replies Jim, with a huge grin upon his face. I am puzzled at the meaning of his broad smile, and wonder what it is that he finds so amusing; but, ere I can inquire of him, he plants himself before me and says: "W'ere's Curls?"

"I dunno. I left 'er batterin' for scoff an'—"

"Waitin' fer 'er?"

"Sure. She ought to be here soon."

"Well, I'm 'fraid ye'll wait long befo' she comes."

Something in his tones and in the expression of amusement upon his countenance sends a chill through me; and the cigar drops out of my hand, and falls unheeded to the sidewalk.

"Wot che mean?" I query faintly.

"Oh, not much," he answers laughingly. "On'y dat she an' Dick sloped on de seven-t'irty an' are goin' east on dere honeymoon."

When, sick at heart, and with a sense of humiliation more irritating than my anger, I meet Blinkey Sam a few weeks later, he claps me upon the shoulder and laughs heartily.

"Wot's dis I hear about yer goin's-on on de road w'en yer jocker (protector) ain' wit che? W'ere's yer fren — ?"

"Oh, gimme a rest," I answer wearily; and something in my voice checks his mirth and softens the look of his eyes as he stares at me.

"Oh, well," he murmurs apologetically, "t'ell wit' women anyhow! Let's git some scoff an' a swipe o' beer, and fergit et."

Which I proceed to do.



### CHAPTER III

WHEREIN I HOLD DOWN A TRAIN, LISTEN TO THE SONG OF  
THE RAILS, BRAVE DIVERS PERILS, AND AM ROUGHLY  
HANDLED

"Kid," says Sam, "let's git out o' dis rotten State, an' take de eight-twenty."

The State to which my companion refers so disparagingly is the fair territory of Arizona, and the cause of his dissatisfaction is to be traced to the cold reception accorded us by the wary and unsympathetic citizens of that glorious section of our republic. In vain has Sam lost his eyesight in trainwrecks, shipwrecks, boiler-explosions and dynamite blasts, and all for naught have my parents died of heart disease, consumption, surgical operations, and intermittent fever: the residents of the far western town visited by us persist in manifesting such indifference to Sam's optics and to my bereavement that half of the time we are on the verge of starvation and the other half over the verge.

"Et ain't right," growls my companion, "to make a blind guy look fer a bit o' punk an' plaster till he strains his eyes so's he kin hardly see. 'Tain't right. Wot's dis country comin' to, anyhow?"

So we wait until nightfall (it being summer, and the days being long) and then take up our position in the darkness about a hundred and fifty feet beyond the station.

"W're ye goin' to ride — unde'neat' or blind?" queries Sam.

"Blind fer me."

"I raddeh ride unde'neat'."

"Not fer me," I reiterate. "Gimme de blind efery time."

A "blind," as every hobo knows (or "blind baggage," as it is more commonly called), is a mail-car without a door at either extremity, and receiving its mail through an opening in the side of the car which is thereupon closed.

Tramps intent upon stealing a ride are naturally partial to the blind baggage. Standing upon the platform they are comparatively secure from attack. If there be doors in the mail-car they are invariably locked. No conductor or brakeman can emerge suddenly from within the car to molest them. The attack must come from without while the car is standing still at a station: for while the train is in motion they are isolated from the crew and need have no fear until the next station approaches.

But the train-hands are always on the lookout for tramps, and the hobo upon the "blind-baggage" is generally discovered before long, and ejected. Hence, many prefer to ride "underneath."

What is meant by "underneath"? The iron truck beneath the car. There are the long iron rods to which the tramp climbs, and whereon he lies outstretched, close to the ground, while the train is in motion. With each hand grasping a rod, he lies upon his precarious support, facing the ground, and feeling the impact of the whirling dirt and the flying pebbles upon his body as he is borne swiftly along.

"Dere she comes!" says Blinkey Sam, as the sound of a distant whistle cuts the air.

Yes, there she comes! A dim light far away that gradually grows bright; a stationary gleam in the distance that begins to move, and to tremble, and to expand, and to assume the appearance of an eye of fire, round, huge and

threatening; a faint murmur that deepens into a hoarse rumble and then into a sullen roar which increases in volume as the fiery-eyed creature draws near.

Yes, here she comes! Encased in armour as though hot for battle, with patches of light gleaming upon her iron plates, and burning coals dropping from her to the road beneath; with the steam hissing as it leaps upward into the darkness, and a bell sending its tones rolling through the air to announce the coming of the mighty demon of the night; roaring, and bellowing, and hissing, and shrieking, as she tugs and strains at the load which she drags across the gloomy land, the screaming creature checks her speed, and the eye of fire, ever open and unblinking, comes to rest.

“Good luck!” says Blinkey Sam, as he parts from me and slinks toward a car, and stoops down in the darkness. I see his figure vanish between the wheels of the truck, and know that he is clambering over the ironwork to the rods whereon he will lie until he reaches his destination or is flung off to be ground to pieces on the tracks.

I wait for the train to start. I am ahead of the engine, and am standing in the darkness, close to the tracks. In a few moments the wheels of the engine begin to turn, and the monster approaches me, and passes by.

The fireman peers forth from the engine and sees me. Does he suspect that I am about to board the train? Who cares? Not I.

There are two “blind” cars in the train, and after these come the passenger coaches. I permit the first “blind” to pass, in order to allay the suspicions of the fireman; nor do I leap upon the front platform of the next car, but wait until the rear platform is opposite me; then I leap up.

The train, which has been gathering speed, suddenly slows down. It is evident that the fireman has apprised

the engineer of my presence. I wait until the locomotive comes to a stop, and then leap off. Glancing back, I see a conductor, with a lighted lantern in his hand, standing upon the rear steps of the first passenger car; and upon the steps of the second car stands another. They have come out to ascertain why the train has stopped: seeing me, they know the reason: a hobo is seeking to steal a ride. What is to be done? Ditch him — eject him — fling him off.

I do not wait for the crew to “ditch” me. I am off, and away. Through the darkness I run, through the thick shrubs and grasses, through the underbrush which seeks to entangle me as I force my way onward, along the soft, moist, soil I hurry until I find myself hidden by shrubbery two hundred feet ahead of the locomotive — and then I halt, and assure myself that I am hidden from view, and calmly wait.

I need not hasten to meet the train: the train is bound to meet me. Very well: here I shall calmly wait.

Again the hissing of steam, and the snorting and bellowing of the engine, and the grinding and bumping of cars set in motion, and the gleam of the fiery eye down the track; again the rails begin to shake and tremble.

The engine passes me while, standing behind the shrubbery, I remain hidden. I see the engineer on the alert, peering ahead; the fireman is sweeping with his glance the bushes and the grasses at the side: neither perceives me in the darkness.

I wait until half the length of the first “blind” is past me, and then rush forward and leap upon the rear platform. I am safe at last.

The train slows down. What now? — Surely neither the fireman nor the engineer saw me board the car. Was any other one of the crew on the alert?



I descend the steps and peer forth. As I do so I perceive a conductor, lantern in hand, running towards me; and behind him walks another.

I do not wait to greet them. I leap into the darkness and seek the shelter of the friendly trees and bushes. They do not follow; but, instead, proceed to bar me from the "blinds" by taking their stand upon the platforms which had previously been open to me. One ascends the platform of the first car, and the other leaps upon the second car. The "blinds" appear to be closed to me.

But are they?

These conductors must get back to the passenger cars to which they have been assigned. As there are no doors in the "blind-baggage," it will be necessary for them eventually to get off the "blinds" in order to enter the passenger coaches. Their plan of operation is clear to me. They purpose to remain upon the platforms until the train shall attain speed enough to satisfy them that all danger of an invasion by the persistent hobo is past: then they will leap off and catch the passenger cars in the rear.

Two courses are now open to me. My first impulse is to run ahead in the darkness and to board the car after the accelerated speed of the train shall have warranted the conductors in abandoning the "blinds" and returning to the passenger cars. I have grown quite expert in boarding moving trains, and am not daunted by the possibility of accidents.

But why adopt this course? The conductors cannot be upon the "blinds" and upon the "passengers" at the same time. They have temporarily abandoned the passenger cars. Very well. I'll reverse their procedure. I'll abandon the "blinds" and ride the "passengers" for a change.

So I run ahead a short distance, and then halt behind

a tree trunk; and in a few moments the engine comes up to me with a triumphant snort as who should say: "Beat me if you can, young man. Choo choo! Choo choo!" and the engineer peers ahead, but does not see me; and the fireman peers forth, but *he* does not see me; and the first "blind-baggage" passes by, and the second "blind-baggage" comes along, and there stand my two friends with their lanterns in their hands, and *they* do not see me; and I know that they are laughing to themselves and are saying: "Beat us if you can, young man. Ha ha! Ha ha!"

Beat them? Yes, I shall beat them. I accept the challenge as I wait for the first passenger car to go by, and then dash forward and leap upon the front platform of the second car.

I glance into the lighted coach half filled with passengers, and suddenly become aware of the fact that two trainmen have opened the rear door at the other end of the car and are rushing down the centre aisle toward me.

So I have been discovered! The shacks are after me!

Very well. Now for the roof of the cars — the "decks," as the hobo designates them.

At my side is the handbrake with its iron wheel to support my feet as I climb upon it. Standing upright, and raising my hands, they encounter the sloping roofs of the two cars between which I stand. No iron bar, no projection for my fingers to grasp firmly: nothing but the down-curving ends of the two decks. And the shacks who seek me have almost reached the door.

There is not a moment to be lost. Placing a hand upon each roof of the two cars, I spring into the air and seek to draw my body upward. If my strength give way or my fingers slip, I shall fall to death between the two cars.

I pant and gasp as I squirm upward. The muscles of

my arms are so tense that I feel as though my flesh is about to split open.

Upward — upward: a moment more, and I have a hand and a foot on the edge of each deck: another moment, and I have swung my body round so that both legs rest upon one car while both hands cling to the edge of the other.

"Get down from there, you darn hobo!" shouts a voice below me, as the two shacks reach the platform.

"Not dis evenin'," I gasp; "some odder evenin'."

I release one of my hands from the second car, and slowly draw my body backward, gliding upon my stomach away from that down-curving edge. Soon my other hand is also free, and I rise to my feet, and stand in the darkness upon the swaying deck.

I stand still a moment to steady myself, for the car is trembling and lurching; then I walk softly forward so that the sound of my footsteps may not be audible to the trainmen below. Not hearing me, they will probably assume that I have seated myself, or am lying down upon the roof, and, at the next station, will await me at the car whereon I have climbed. They shall wait in vain.

In climbing up between the two cars I had swung my body to the rear edge of the first passenger coach. I now hurry forward along the roof, intent upon reaching the first blind, two cars ahead.

Suddenly, in the darkness, I slip; and then realize that I have reached the down-curve at the forward end, and am about to fall from the roof. With a last desperate effort to save myself, I gather all my strength for a leap across the black space between the two cars, and the next moment I land upon the second blind, and am struggling to maintain a foothold upon its treacherous surface.

I feel myself slipping, and, in desperation, fling myself downward with outstretched arms. My left hand catches



the iron pipe or rod extending along the roof of the car, and this saves me from disaster. I draw myself upward and regain my feet.

My mishap does not deter me from hurrying along the roof and leaping to the first blind. But before doing so, I increase my speed as I approach the edge, and hurry over the curve with quick movements, as I should have done on the other car.

And now, arrived upon the first blind, I walk forward leisurely toward the engine, and watch the sparks flying upward like a fountain of fire, and note the gleam of the light upon the tracks ahead, and behold objects springing out of the darkness into the light, and see —

What's this?

In an instant I am down upon my knees. The next moment I am lying outstretched upon my stomach, hugging the deck.

Another moment and we enter a tunnel, and I measure the height of its rocky roof and wonder whether, had I remained standing, it would have taken off my head, or would have merely broken my neck and flung my body to the tracks.

But now I realize that I am tired, and that rest is good, so, composing myself for slumber in such a position that the jolting of the train will not readily dislodge me, I close my eyes and go to sleep. When I was younger and rawer I did not venture to slumber upon the roofs of passenger coaches, and never dared to close my eyes while riding the decks unless I lay upon the flat, comfortable roof of a freight car; but the fear which kept me awake in earlier years has long since passed away, and now I sleep calmly and serenely while the train bears me through the night.

I am awakened by a blow upon the head from some hard object. Raising my head (I am close to the forward edge



of the roof) I see the fireman standing upon the heap of coal in the tender, with a heavy lump of coal in his right hand.

“Want another?” he queries.

“Naw.”

“Well, ye’ll get one anyhow.”

As he speaks, he hurls the missile at me. It strikes my shoulder, and its impact almost serves to fling me from the car.

The coals are big and heavy, each weighing several pounds — dangerous missiles at any time when flung at an unprotected man; but doubly dangerous when the man is clinging to the roof of a passenger coach, and the train is proceeding at full speed.

“Say, you!” I protest. “Wot’s de matteh wit’ ye? I ain’t doin’ nothin’.”

“Jump off!” he commands, raising a heavy coal menacingly.

I deliberate upon my course of action. I am hot with anger, and fervently hope that I may some day meet that fireman alone and recognise him.

What am I to do? If I do not change my position I shall surely be battered to death or fall from the car. My first impulse is to rise to my feet, leap upon the tender, and grapple with my assailant. Such an encounter would probably mean death to one of us, as there would not be room enough for two combatants upon that heap of coal.

But what if I yield to this impulse. Is he alone?

No. In the caboose sits his friend, the engineer; and somewhere about the person of the engineer, or close at hand, there is a revolver. And it requires but one well-directed shot to kill a hobo or any other man.

As I struggle to my knees and turn around toward the rear of the “blind,” a heavy lump of coal strikes me upon

the shoulder with sufficient force to lame my arm; but before the fireman can grasp another missile I am upon my feet, and am running along the deck, and in another moment I have leapt to the second "blind" and am softly hastening along its roof; and thus I hasten from one car to the other until I reach the last passenger coach, and here I lie down upon the roof and await our approach to the next station.

The locomotive is panting and throbbing as though spent with the effort of her toil; and at times she gasps, and then she wheezes, as the steam escapes from her iron lungs; and sometimes she hisses, and sometimes she shrieks, and I feel the train tremble as she grows weak and feels her strength waning.

But the fireman gives her food. Now that I am gone, he turns to her whom he guards. I cannot see him, nor can I hear, in the roar of the train, the sound of the coal as it leaps into her fiery stomach; but I feel that her lungs are filling up with the steam which is her life, and that her voice is growing stronger and more triumphant than ever as she sings to the rails the song which they love to hear.

"Oho!" they cry in admiration: "Make way! Make way! We bear her onward across the plains; we lead her onward across the mountain heights; we guide her through dense forests and over desolate plateaus, across bridges which span turbulent streams, and amid chasms where the earth is cleft, and huge mountains of rock rise on either side to towering heights. We lead her through dark tunnels into the depths of the earth, where the echoes bound and rebound from roof to ground, and from the ground to the sides, and from wall to wall, until the gloom resounds with screech upon screech and roar upon roar.

"Make way! Make way as we bear her onward! We are the rails that carry her weight; we are her guides and

we lead her aright. We lie outstretched beneath her feet and utter no sound until she treads upon us heavily. We lie in the sunlight and wait. We lie in the darkness, silent and motionless; and in the gloom of night we hide ourselves and wait.

“We lie in the sunlight; we lie in the darkness; we lie silent and motionless — and wait.”

The train slows down. I have been dozing; and now I rouse myself and raise my head. We are approaching a hamlet that is sleeping in darkness, with here and there a kerosene lamp or a lantern twinkling lazily. Down the track are two lanterns in front of a little station which is, as yet, engulfed in the gloom; and, from the tremor of the train and its reduced speed, I surmise that we are scheduled to stop at that station.

Very well! then I must prepare to alight.

I am now upon the last car of the train, and it is my intention to slide off the deck on the side farthest from the station so that I may reach the ground in the darkness and be hidden from the light of the lanterns by the body of the car. I wait until the train stops, and slide off the roof and down the side that is farthest away from the station, and thus reach the ground, and for just one moment feel that I have eluded the “crew,” who are doubtless waiting for me on the other side of the train.

For just one moment, I say — for the next moment I am in the grasp of two strong arms, and my captor is shouting “I’ve got him!” to a brakeman, who forthwith runs toward us with a lantern in his hand; and struggle as I may, I cannot escape from those two strong hands which hold me so tightly in their grasp.

I twist, and turn, and squirm in an effort to loosen the hold of those iron fingers; but the brakeman comes up, and strikes me upon the head with his lantern, and dazes me;



and, as the blood trickles down my forehead, I desist from my efforts and stand still, breathing hard.

"Got enough?"

"No," I mutter sullenly.

"Well, here's another," and, as he speaks, he again raises his lantern and strikes me upon the head.

The pain that shoots through me, and the hot anger aroused at the brutality of this assault, goad me to madness. I become imbued with the strength of desperation as I break from my captor's hold, and strike out to right and to left. One fist catches my captor in the eye and sends him to the ground; the other lands upon the brakeman's jaw, and, as he staggers back, I wrest his lantern from his hand, and strike him with full force upon the head.

"Help!" he shouts, as he falls bleeding to the ground.

"'Bo! 'Bo!" I shout, sending forth the cry of the hobo to his kind, in the hope that some wanderers may lurk in the vicinity and come to my aid ere my pursuers can overcome me. For now I am in full flight, with the train crew after me, and there is no one to rescue me if I should be captured and attacked.

On the rods beneath one of the cars lies Blinkey Sam, my jocker and protector. He hears my cry, and realizes that I am in danger, and that my enemies are numerous, and that I am alone and in dire distress. He knows that his presence upon the "sleepers" is not suspected, and that, if he remains quiet, he may ride undisturbed to his destination, whereas if he should come to my rescue he would jeopardize his liberty and, perhaps, his life. Knowing all this and weighing it well, think you that Blinkey Sam would hesitate to come to the assistance of the boy whom he loves and whom he has jockeyed during the years



which have elapsed since the Newark Kid first became his protégé? Would he hesitate to come to my rescue?

He would. He would hesitate long before endangering the security of his precious person for the sake of the boy whom he loves about as well as he is capable of loving any one.

He lies outstretched upon the iron rods in the truck of one of the cars. To either side of him are the wheels which are now at a standstill so that he could readily crawl forth to my assistance; but he is safe from attack, and lies there in comfort, and makes no response to my cry for help. And I run through the darkness, and call again "'Bo! 'Bo!" and hear the steps of my pursuers behind me, and suddenly stumble and fall.

Before I can rise to my feet they are upon me. Some one strikes me with his fist upon my right cheek just as a lantern descends with terrific force upon my bleeding head; and, as I fall prostrate, they kick my unresisting body with brutal zest, and one of them leaps upon me. As his heavy shoes crush in my flesh, I give vent to one shriek of agony, and then grow unconscious.

Towards morning some pedestrian discovers me lying in a pool of blood, and notifies the coroner that the body of a murdered youth is lying alongside the railroad tracks.

As it is found that I am still breathing, the coroner sends me to a hospital where it is discovered that two of my ribs are fractured, and that the cuts in my scalp require a score of stitches; also that my body is covered with bruises and abrasions.

After four weeks I am discharged from the hospital; and two weeks later I meet my good friend Blinkey in the streets of Chicago.

He looks at me shamefacedly, and colors as he observes the contemptuous expression upon my face as I pass by without greeting him.

"Hello!" he calls after me with affected heartiness; "ain' che goin' to shake han's wit' yer jocker?"

I stop, and turn round, and face him.

"Jocker?" I repeat disdainfully. "You ain' no jocker o' mine. I'm a blowed-in-de-glass stiff; but you — you're on'y a tomato-can vag."

And, with this withering retort, I leave him staring after me, gaping, dumfounded, and crestfallen, as I pass on in lofty disdain.

BOOK IV

IN THE TOILS OF THE LAW





## CHAPTER I

WHEREIN I FIND MYSELF IN THE GRASP OF THE LAW

A Christmas morning, bright and clear.

A Christmas landscape, too, with a thin layer of snow upon the ground. Here and there a black rock shows its head and peeps from beneath its white cap, and stares forth as though meditating whether it should remain tucked up in bed or should roll forth its body from beneath the white coverlid which reaches to its chin.

Upon the trees are white, snowy fingers which press down upon the branches, and shake them and adapt their shapes to the forms of the boughs whereon they rest. Thick fingers of snow here, where the boughs are thick; and slim fingers there, where the branches are slender; and short fingers where branches begin and then end abruptly; and long fingers where they refuse to end, but persist in stretching on and on until their tapering forms become mere threads.

The houses have grown white and clean overnight. Gone is the soot which has clung to the roofs, and gone is the dirt which begrimed the staring eaves; for now the snow has settled down upon the housetops, and who would disturb the snow?

Not the women, for they are indoors, preparing the Christmas feast, and bustling about the kitchen, and rushing from room to room in great excitement, and besieging the oven whereon the kettles are steaming, and opening the oven door to assure themselves that the turkey is not

burned to a crisp, and tasting the pudding, and cutting the pie.

Not the men, for they are ensconced in their comfortable chairs and are reading the news of Christmas Day — of how Tommy the Vagrant, being friendless and alone, committed suicide last night in a cheap lodging house; of how Annie the Apple Woman was found half frozen upon the streets; of how a great victory was won by the Army of Civilised Soldiers in green over the Army of Uncivilised Soldiers in red, and of how the Civilised Soldiers slaughtered the retreating Army of Uncivilised Soldiers, to the glory of Civilisation and the honor of God's name. Hosanna!

Surely not the children. They would not disturb the snow, or bid it begone — not they! For what can equal the joy of sliding upon the icy pavement, or skating upon the frozen pond, or coasting down the hill, and filling the air with the music of laughter and the shouts of happy boys and girls engrossed in play?

Who would disturb the snow? What man, what creature, what animate thing? What but the locomotive engine which comes puffing along like a thing of life, blowing the black soot over the white coverlid until it grows grey and ugly; dropping glowing coals upon the railroad ties and melting the snow; dragging the heavy cars after it over the white tracks, and leaving black scars and gashes upon the pallid face of the earth. And upon the cold iron rods beneath one of the cars I lie outstretched, as I have lain for fully an hour — cold, frozen, shivering, feeling the wind in my face as we speed along; closing my eyes lest I be blinded by the dirt and the pebbles which leap up from the road-bed and strike my cheeks and enter my nostrils; covered with the snow (now grey, and black, and dirty) which springs up to meet me, and clings to my hair, and

to my clothing, and to my smarting hands and forehead.

My body is so numb that I fear the lurching of the train will dislodge me before the next station is reached; but I hear in the distance the welcome sound of church-bells, and I know that in a few minutes I shall be able to crawl forth and to seek my food.

The church-bells ring out merrily, and my empty stomach interprets their song. Turkey! dingdong, dingdong — and more turkey! — dingdong, dingdong — and cranberry sauce! — dingdong, dingdong — and hot, hot soup for a cold, cold tramp! — dingdong, dingdong — and puddings and pies, and a score of delicacies to fill me, and warm me, and inspire me with good will toward men and love for all the world.

And here my imagination runs riot; and I gorge myself, and bless the day whereon the Christian world opens its hearts and its homes, and will not turn away from its doors even one who belongs to the despised race of its Savior.

The train slows down, and comes to a stop; and I clamber over the truck, and emerge from beneath the car, and find myself in the centre of a busy little town with numerous stores across the way from the railroad station, and colored glass globes and bright tinsel sparkling in their windows amid paper streamers of varied hues.

As I emerge from the shadow of the car I find that my movements have been observed by a tall man in a dirty black coat; but I proceed nonchalantly upon my way, and have walked half way across the street, when I find the tall man at my side.

“Had a good ride?” he queries.

I have no desire to enter into conversation with him, as my stomach is yearning for a cup of hot coffee and a bite

of bread, so I answer curtly: "Putty good," and walk away from him.

But he is intent upon keeping me company, and in another moment is at my side again, inquiring: "Where are you going?"

"No place in pe'tic'lar," I reply coldly.

"Well, I guess ye better go with me," and, as he speaks, his hand closes about my right arm.

Then it suddenly dawns upon me that I am in the grasp of a detective; and, at the thought, the vision of choice viands, smoking turkey, and delicious cranberry sauce — the vision which had sustained me in my cold and perilous trip beneath the car — takes flight, and I feel wretched, and discouraged, and sick at heart; and all the joy of Christmas suddenly departs.

"Am I pinched?"

"Yes, ye're pinched sure enough."

"Wot for?"

"For bein' a hobo. Ain't that enough? Come along."

So I come along past the stores bright with holiday decorations, past the houses from whose windows the holly peers cheerfully forth, past men and women and children who gaze at me curiously — on to the police station where I stand trembling before a desk, and confront an officer in a blue coat with numerous brass buttons and a big gold shield.

"What's your name?"

"Samuel Smith."

This is forthwith recorded in a book.

"Age?"

"Sixteen."

"Where born?"

"New York."

I have never before been arrested; and, though my moral



degeneration has been rapid during the years of my association with vagabonds and criminals, I have not sunk so low as to contemplate my arrest without feelings of shame and humiliation. So I conceal my name and birth-place, and lie bravely.

"What's the charge?" This to my captor.

"Vagrancy." Then, to a policeman who is standing near the door: "Lock him up."

So I am locked up in a bare, narrow cell containing no furniture save a cot whereon a man is seated in a dejected attitude, with his face buried in his hands. He is a tanner, as I subsequently learn, and, having lost his position two months ago, has been wandering about in search of employment. His clothes are worn and stained, and he was doubtless mistaken for a tramp by the officer who arrested him; but he is no vagrant — of that I am convinced — and I have no doubt but that he will be released as soon as the judge hears his story.

"W'en will de judge be here?" I inquire of a policeman who passes my cell door.

"To-morrow morning."

"Te-morreh?" I repeat in dismay.

"Why, of course, to-morrow." Then he adds, with a contemptuous glance at the prisoners in the cells before him: "D'ye think he is going to miss his turkey or pay a Christmas visit over here to see the likes o' *you*? A fine lot of greasy mugs you are! Ye ought to be in hell, all of ye!"

"Oh, shut yer face an' fade away," comes in a deep voice from an adjoining cell. "Ye're on'y a bag o' wind, anyhow."

"Stop your jawin', Red Bill, or you'll be sent up so quick that ye'll be in zebras (the striped suit of a convict) before you know it."

"Wot t'ell do I care fer zebras!" growls the deep voice in retort. "I've worn 'em often enough, an'll wear 'em some more afore I die, I hopes."

"When are we goin' to get dinner?" pipes up a shrill voice from somewhere.

"One o'clock; and lucky ye'll be if ye get it then."

"What'll we get?"

Here there is a tense silence as our stomachs grow rigid, and listen. For our stomachs have ears. Mine surely has. For this is the day whereon no tramp is turned away hungry — a day of feasting and rejoicing throughout the domains of Hoboland — when big cities provide big feasts for the Children of the Abyss, and the Underworld is made gay with lights and feasts, and even the minister's prayer, though it delays the feast, is listened to in silence — a prayer about thankfulness, and regeneration, and eternal goodness, and equally incomprehensible and unintelligible things.

Fool that I was not to seek the Big City for Christmas!

For there my Brethren of the Abyss sit at table, banded together in poverty — tramp, pickpocket, honest man, burglar, cutthroat — and the Salvation Army, or the Charitable Organisation, or the Municipality, fills their stomachs, and they eat and drink until they feel themselves part of the World of Love for a day, and not to be cast off and pummelled until the morrow.

"What'll we get?"

"Turkey an' cranberry sauce, I suppose — an' soup an' pie."

I breathe easier now. I have heard that most of the prisons are kind to their inmates on Christmas: but I know that not all of them are equally generous. Evidently fate has not been as cruel to me this day as I had feared.

Dinner comes at last. But where is the feast that was promised us? This? — is this the feast? — this plate of hot water with bread-crumbs floating in it, and this half loaf of stale bread: is this our dinner?

Aye, this is our Christmas feast.

The Tanner in my cell, who has been arrested because he could find no employment, receives it with a snarl. I hear growls and curses from the other cells. The facetious policeman, just returned from a dinner where there was *real* turkey, and *real* soup, and cranberry sauce and pie, views the prisoners with smiling countenance, and expresses the hope that we enjoyed the roast turkey.

The man with the deep voice roars that he'd like to have a certain fat-bellied policeman over a slow-roasting fire. *He'd* show 'm w'ether he liked roast turkey then, he would. And all the other cells grunt approval.

I pass a sleepless night, for my cell-mate, the Tanner, moans all night: Wot'll his wife an' kid say? — Wot'll dey say if dey hear dad's locked up?

I feel little sympathy for him, for he will be liberated on the morrow when the judge hears his story; but what will be done to me who am truly a hobo, and who have been caught stealing a ride?

The morning dawns, and finds us sitting dejectedly on our cot. The bugs which have crawled all night over the dirty blanket scurry to cover. The town has provided generously for its prisoners — as generously as all other towns provide for the imprisoned awaiting trial in this land of liberty, where every man is presumed to be innocent until proved guilty. Pending trial, let the innocent and the guilty wallow together in the filth, and bless the justice which so ordains it.

At nine o'clock our cells are unlocked, and we are ushered into the court room where sits the judge. He is

short, and fat, and florid, and choleric, and he looks up with a frown as we enter and file before him.

We are a disreputable-looking band, unwashed, unkempt, with unshaved faces, and tattered clothes. And we have had no breakfast.

"Tom Williams!" calls the clerk, who is as thin as the judge is fat, and who possesses a keen sense of humour which finds relief in a broad smile whenever the magistrate finds a man guilty.

Tom Williams ducks his bewildered head (he is a broad-shouldered fellow of forty, or thereabouts, with a bright, open countenance) and steps forward.

Charge: loitering on the street.

Guilty or not guilty?

"Not guilty," declares Tom Williams, firmly.

"Let the officer be sworn."

The officer is sworn, and maintains that Tom Williams stood upon a street corner and refused to move on when directed so to do.

"What have you to say?"

Tom Williams has not much to say. It is true that he stood upon the street corner, and that he did not move on immediately; but he lives in the suburbs, and had come to town to visit a friend, and had experienced difficulty in locating the street where his friend lived: and, as he stood upon the corner in indecision, the policeman had grasped him by the shoulder and had ordered him to move on. He had resented this, and had tried to explain matters to the officer, but the latter had refused to listen to him, and had arrested him forthwith.

"Then you plead guilty to loitering?" queries the judge impatiently.

"Well, you might call that loitering if you want to, but I didn't mean any harm, and —"



"Five days," says the magistrate, whereat Tom Williams turns pale, and the clerk smiles in amusement.

"James Pearson!"

James shuffles forward, bleary-eyed and red-faced.

Charge: drunk and disorderly. Guilty or not guilty?

"Well, yer Honour, o' course, it bein' Chris'mas, I may 'a' took a drop or two, but —"

"Thirty days.— Next!"

Next is charged with a like offence — drunk and disorderly.

"Guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty. Et wasen' more'n two glasses o' beer, an'—"

"Thirty days.— Next!"

Same charge. Thirty days.— Next!

I am growing bewildered. The "thirty days" come in such rapid succession that I grow cold as I listen, and my heart beats so rapidly that its sound seems to suffocate me. Thirty days, and thirty days, and thirty days once more; and now it is the Tanner's turn to step forth, and next it will be mine.

As my cellmate advances to the desk at which the magistrate sits, I suddenly feel a sense of relief at the thought that at last the evil spell will be broken by a prisoner's discharge. For he is innocent — of that I am convinced — an unfortunate labourer, discharged from his position, and vainly seeking employment so that his wife and babe might live.

Charge: vagrancy.

"Innocent or guilty?"

"Not guilty, yer Honour. I —"

"Where do you work?"

"I ain' got any work jus' at present. I'm looking —"

Thus far. No further.

“Thirty days.—Next!”

And the wife and babe starving at home! What of the wife and babe?

Next!

I am next.

“Samuel Smith!”

I step forward. I have never before been in a courtroom; but the tramps with whom I have associated have frequently rehearsed their experiences, and have familiarised me with the procedure before magistrates. Hardened though I am, and floundering in the depths where the social outcasts writhe and squirm, I nevertheless am not so depraved that I can view the prospect of imprisonment without trepidation. I even feel something akin to shame as I stand before the judge and feel his eyes, and the eyes of the spectators in the courtroom, focused upon me. But the emotion which dominates me at this moment is not so much shame as fear — fear of that strange, mysterious force which men call Law, and which wars upon me as I have warred upon it.

Until to-day it has been hidden behind its agents whom I have repeatedly outwitted; but now it is in hiding no longer, but lays its hand heavily upon my shoulder, and stares into my eyes boldly and balefully and triumphantly — and I am afraid.

“How old are you?” inquires the judge, as I step forward.

“Sixteen.”

“Sixteen, eh? Well, you’re a pretty tough looking youngster, you are.” This remark draws forth such laughter from the thin clerk that the proceedings are temporarily suspended to enable the spectators to participate in the merriment. I feel my cheeks grow hot as I picture to myself my unwashed face and frowsy hair and dirty

clothes, and I wish that I were free, and that the jovial clerk were within reach of my fists, and no one near to see the end.

"What's the charge?" queries the judge.

"Vagrancy," answers the clerk.

"Aren't you ashamed to be a bum at your age? What have you got to say?"

I have much to say. A glance over the courtroom satisfies me that the officer who has arrested me is not present to press the charge. My reason tells me that in his absence I cannot be convicted, as any story which I may tell will remain uncontradicted: so I proceed to relate how I came into town on an early train, and was hunting for a restaurant wherein to have breakfast, when an officer accosted me and placed me under arrest, notwithstanding my protestations of innocence.

"How much money did you have when you left home?"

"T'ree dollahs."

"And how much was the railroad fare?"

"Two dollahs an' ten cen's."

"Show me your ninety cents change."

"I—I—I got a hole in me pocket an'—"

"Have you? That's too bad. Well, I'll give you thirty days' time to sew up that hole, and thirty days extra for lying. Next!"

The clerk is convulsed with laughter, and the whole courtroom snickers audibly. The band of vagabonds ranged before the desk eye me with amusement; and even the unfortunate Tanner ceases to brood over his misfortune, and smiles faintly as he hears my sentence and realizes that, after all, my punishment is more severe than his.

A policeman takes me by the arm and conducts me to the rear of the room, where the prisoners who had previ-

ously been arraigned await me; and here I remain standing, dazed and bewildered, until all the remaining prisoners have been sentenced.

Everything seems strange and hazy to me, and I pay no attention to the proceedings which follow my conviction until a laugh in the courtroom rouses me, and I see a disreputable individual with red hair and red face and a tangled red beard standing complacently before the judge.

"Red Bill," says the magistrate.

"Dat's me."

"How do you plead — guilty or not guilty?"

"Oh, hell!" answers Red Bill wearily. "Make et sixty days."

This unexpected reply evokes a storm of laughter in the courtroom. The spectators roar; the clerk becomes quite doubled up, like a jack-knife; and even the fat judge laughs ha! ha! ha! as though he had suddenly discovered that he was human, and had decided that it was about time for him to come to life.

"Ha! ha! ha!" he laughs; and then: "Discharged!" he cries. But Red Bill does not move.

"Discharged!" repeats the judge.

"'Scuse me, jedge; but et's mighty cold outside, an' et's nice an' warm in de pen (penitentiary), an' I'm told de eaten' ain' so bad in dis burg (town) needer. So if ye'll make et sixty days I'll be much 'bliged to ye."

"And if I don't?"

"Oh, den I'll hev to hold up some guy, I s'pose, or lift some fat leddeh (steal some well-filled pocketbook) an' go up fer a spot (year) o' two."

"Well," laughs the judge, "I guess that won't be necessary. I'll make it sixty days for you."

"T'anks, jedge. Glad to do de same fer you some day



w'en I gits te be jedge." And, amid general laughter, he is conducted to the rear of the room, where he joins us.

Soon a policeman leads us to our cells, from which we emerge, an hour later, to enter the Black Maria, a closed vehicle, into which we are hustled like cattle, and herded in the gloom, and then driven over rocky roads, and are finally deposited before an iron gate in a huge stone wall. Here the rear door of the vehicle is opened, and we are told to get out; and, having done so, the Black Maria is driven off, and we are led into the prison-yard, and are thence conducted to the warden's office.

"You have been a vagabond," says the law, "and must be punished lest you continue your evil life and commit greater wrongs against society. And, in order that you may be saved from such evil life and may become a worthy member of society, it is ordained that you spend two months in the constant companionship of thieves, burglars, highwaymen and cutthroats."

So, whether I will or no, I am sentenced to become a Worthy Member of Society, and am directed to begin my education with a course of instruction under the tutelage of those eminent educators, the Powers That Prey.

## CHAPTER II

### INTRODUCING THE READER TO MY CHARMING FRIENDS, SLIPPERY JOE, RED BILL, AND GREEN TOM

I am bathed, my clothes are taken from me, and I am arrayed in the striped suit of the convict, commonly known as "zebras" by the denizens of the Underworld. My hair is cropped short, and my head glistens like the glossy coat of the frisky animal whose stripes adorn my person; and, thus transformed, I am ushered into the new life which opens before me.

From the office of the warden an iron door, with iron bars extending from top to bottom, leads into the large "hall" (as it is called) wherein the cells are located. A vast hall, with its ceiling four stories above the ground, and its walls of stone blocks whitewashed and bare; a hall long and wide and destitute of all furniture save two unwashed and unvarnished deal tables, and half a dozen old chairs scattered about. A stone floor, and a metal ceiling; and, rising from the floor almost to the ceiling, stands the huge iron box whose compartments are termed cells.

It stands in the centre of the hall, and is comprised of three long tiers of cells, one above the other, facing one wall, and three tiers, one above the other, facing the opposite wall, and in each tier are twenty-five cells. In front of the second and third tiers run iron balconies, with iron railings at their outer edge, and from the stone floor iron staircases run up to the balconies, thereby connecting them, and enabling the keepers to reach the upper cells.

One hundred and fifty cells, or cages, and one hundred and fifty grated doors, and within each cage of iron four or five or six men in striped suits, peering down from between the iron grating of the door to the keeper who is seated at one of the deal tables upon the stone floor below.

I am placed in a cell on the third tier. My cellmates are the Tanner, Red Bill, and two pickpockets: and as there are but four bunks in the cell (two on each side, placed one above the other) it is necessary for one of us to sleep with one of the others. After a short consultation it is decided that I, being the youngest, shall share a bunk with each of the others in turn.

“Well, boys,” says Red Bill jovially, as he seats himself upon one of the bunks, “here am I again — back to de ole home. Same kind o’ walls, same kind o’ room — ready foinished an’ rent free — an’ no coal te buy, or foinace te look afteh — rooms heated, an’ janitah soivice free. Dat’s wot I calls comf’table livin’.”

The food which we receive is neither appetising nor varied. It consists of bread three times a day, together with weak coffee for breakfast, weak soup for dinner, and weak coffee at night. Nothing more. On Sundays we receive a portion of meat which was once fresh, but has sadly degenerated in the course of the ages; but we eat it with avidity, leaving no vestige undevoured.

In the morning and at night a guard brings the bread and coffee to our cells; but during the day we are obliged to work in the prison yard from morning until late in the afternoon, with a short intermission for dinner. A new wing to the prison is soon to be constructed; and some of the convicts (including myself) have been assigned the task of excavating the cellar.

So I am set to work, with pick in hand, to open the com-

pact earth; and, for the first time in my life, I work, and work hard. My hands grow blistered, my muscles ache; at night I am scarcely able to move; every inch of my body feels raw and sore.

Over us stands a sentry, with gun in hand; and around us are more sentries; and on the walls which enclose our prison stand other sentries, with their muskets in their hands.

I cannot escape. I can only work and swear.

I do both. I curse the officer who arrested me, the magistrate who committed me, and the sentries who guard me. I curse them all, severally and collectively, morning, noon and night, in language fervent and forceful. My cellmates swell the chorus. Red Bill protests that when he insisted upon being sentenced to imprisonment for sixty days he assumed that he would be confined in the county jail, where scarcely any work would be exacted from a prisoner, and where the winter could be passed with some degree of comfort.

"An' here dis 'ere blankety blankety blank of a jedge," pursues he of the fiery locks, "goes an' puts me in dis blankety blank of a rotten joint w'ere ye woiks till ye bust, an' lives on wind-puddin' (air) an' soap suds." And here follows such a volley of oaths, and of such varied degrees of picturesqueness and effectiveness, that, in justice to the reader, I am obliged to smother them in blankets.

The Tanner, too, adds his complaint, reviling the courts and the administration of justice, and demanding to know who would support his wife and babe.

"Dunno," answers Red Bill wearily. "I'm putty sure I won't." Whereat we laugh.

We laugh a great deal at the Tanner. He is always in such deadly earnest, and grows so hot with indignation



at the thought of his unwarranted arrest and imprisonment, that he affords huge amusement to us all.

"Jus' think of et, gentlemen!" he begins. "Here am I alookin' fer work —"

"Well, ye struck de right place here," interrupts Bill, "ef dat's wot che want."

"— An' sent to prison — disgraced for life: — an' for wot? Wot was the charge against me?"

"Nahtin'," answers Bill soothingly. "Ye wasen' charged nahtin'. Dey pinched yez without chargin' ye a cent."

"Imprisoned because I was lookin' fer work! An' wot's goin' to become o' my wife an' little kid? They don' even know that I'm here. How can I send them a letter?"

"Easy anough. Jes' write et, den chloroform de guards, kill de warden, hook de keys, den open de gate, walk te de post office, an' git back agin befo' de warden wakes up."

But the Tanner is in no mood for laughter, and there is no laughter in his face or in his heart. His eyes have that hot gleam which comes from lack of sleep, and his eyelids twitch frequently. His hands, too, know no rest, but change their position constantly; and the look upon his face is wild and hopeless.

Oh, yes, it is very amusing to watch him. He is scarcely thirty-five; but his earnestness and his wild outbursts are so droll that we laugh aloud whenever he expatiates on his wrongs.

There are six guards in charge of the six tiers of cells; and they are assisted by ten trusties in prison garb who sweep and mop the floors, and subdue the refractory prisoners, and attack those convicts who have incurred their displeasure, and in divers other respects impress their fellow prisoners with a proper respect for their

power and authority. Hall Men they are called, and their overlord is known as the First Hall Man — a convict, like themselves — and he it is who has power to appoint and to discharge, to take them out of their cells and invest them with authority over their fellows, or to send them back again if they incur his displeasure.

A great man is the First Hall Man — a man of importance in the prison community — a big, heavy, broad-shouldered man, with a red, blotched face, and cold grey eyes, and a thick neck, and ears which stand out from his head like funnels. An honest man, who will take no bribe unless it be offered to him; a kind-hearted man, who will refuse no bribe lest his refusal wound the sensibilities of the briber; a gentle individual, who, when any prisoner in his charge arouses his resentment, will forthwith employ such gentle instruments of persuasion as soft wooden clubs or plastic iron bars wielded noiselessly and judiciously.

I soon learn that the prison reeks with bribery. Graft is the term employed; and the Head Grafter is the First Hall Man, and the other grafters are the guards and the subordinate hall men. Fortunate is the convict who, when his clothes and belongings are taken from him upon his entry into the prison, succeeds in smuggling a few dollars into his cell. For him the guards and the hall men reserve tobacco, or an extra portion of bread if he be hungry, or writing materials, so that he may communicate with his friends. Toward him the heart of the guard inclineth with tender yearning and brotherly love. Verily it is a blessed privilege to be a guard, and to love the stranger within your gates. While his money lasts.

“Won’ ye please gimme a little writing paper?” pleads the Tanner one morning, addressing a guard who is about to pass our cell.

"Go chase yerself!" is the reply, as the guard passes on.

He has listened to the request so often that its reiteration has grown monotonous.

"One moment! One moment, please!"

The guard turns, impressed by the earnestness of the pathetic figure behind the grated door, and approaches the Tanner.

"Well, wot's troublin' yer nut now?"

"I wan' te write to my wife. She'll be sick with worryin'. She don' know w'ere I am, an' she's kinder delicate an'— an'—"

His lips quiver; his eyes fill with tears; he grasps the bars of the cell-door with both hands, and presses his face against the grating.

"I wan' te write to her," he concludes plaintively.

"Well, w'y t'ell don' che do et?" says the guard, grinning in his face.

"I ain' got no paper or pencil. Won' ye please get me a scrap o' paper? She'll worry her head off. She alwuz did worry a lot. She's kinder delicate, she is."

But the guard is already on his way toward the iron stairway which leads to the lower balcony.

"Come back! Come back!" sobs the Tanner. "I'll give ye somethin'. Here! I'll give ye somethin'."

The guard, whose name is Fish, finds his interest stimulated to such an extent by the offer as to impel him to retrace his steps and to return to the door of our cell.

"Now ye're talkin' business," he says, with a knowing wink. "W'y didnen' ye say dat befo' instead o' talking t'roo yer hat? How much is et wort' te git a letteh t'roo de pen?"

"Oh, I'll give ye anything ye want," cries the Tanner

eagerly. "I ain' got any money now, but as soon as I get a job I'll —"

"Ain' got no money? Den w'y de hell do ye play me fer a sucker?" And, as the disappointed ruffian hisses the words, his fist shoots in between the bars of the door, and strikes the Tanner in the chest so that my cellmate staggers back, and almost loses his balance.

We roar in amusement at the discomfiture of our cellmate — Red Bill, and Slippery Joe, and Green Tom, and I — Oh, we are a precious set, we four! — we all laugh loudly at our companion's bewilderment, and I as loudly as any of them.

I am in their midst — close to them. I breakfast with them, sup with them, and sleep with them. The State is taking care of me. It compels me to work and, in return, supplies me with food, clothes, lodging, and the attractive companionship (always fascinating to an imaginative youth) of trained thieves. It says: "You have been wayward, and must be reclaimed. In order to hasten your reclamation you shall have pickpockets as your cellmates, and criminals of all classes as your companions, so that from them you may learn morality and respect of law."

And I, being an apt pupil, learn readily.



## CHAPTER III

### HOW I LEARNED TO APPRECIATE THE PRISON FARE, AND HOW A NEWSPAPER AFFECTED THE TANNER

As I have previously stated, the guard who has charge of the tier of cells on our floor is named Fish.

I think he was named Fish because he looks like one. He has fishy eyes which are always watery, and a fishy head with receding forehead and chin, and hands which are moist and cold, like the fins of his namesake.

He loves to glide along the iron balcony which skirts the cells as noiselessly as a fish swims across a pond, and to listen to the conversation which floats out from the iron cages, and to nibble at it as though it were the most delicious bait. For he is ever on the alert, in the hope of catching some incendiary utterance, so that he may dart at the offender, and swallow the latter alive, as it is his nature to do to any smaller fishes that swim his way.

And so it is that, on a certain evening, he hears me complaining to my cellmates of the quality of the bread, and forthwith appears before my cell-door, and leers at me through the iron grating.

"Don' like de bread, heh? Wot's de matteh wit' et, heh?"

"It's as hard as a rock. Breaks yer teet' bitin' et."

"Hard, is et? Ye're mighty pertic'lar (ain' che?) fer a guy dat's jugged (imprisoned)."

"I ain't pertic'lar," I retort with some asperity, "but we don' git no Delmonico bill o' fare in dis hash-house, an'

ye might give us some decent bread wit' de hot watch dat we gits, anyhow."

"So ye don' like de bread, heh?" he queries, staring at me with his fishy eyes, and chuckling. "Dat's too bad, dat is," he adds, and takes his departure.

"Look out for that guy," says Slippery Joe, warningly.

"W'y?"

"He's got charge of the bread, you know, and I don't think he liked what you said."

"Wot de devil do I care!" I say, with a frown.

The next morning my cellmates are served with bread and coffee: I receive only the latter.

"Say, Fish!" I call aloud; "w're's me grub?"

"Ye don' like grub, ye know," replies the guard, with a grin; "so I didn' git none fer ye," and takes his departure.

My companions share their meal with me, though the portion of bread allotted to each prisoner is much too small to satisfy the appetite of a healthy man: and, after breakfast, we march out to the prison-yard to work, and at noon we march back again for dinner.

It is a pleasant march — six hundred men in line — murderers, burglars, incendiaries, embezzlers, thieves, and here and there a man as innocent of wrongdoing as is the Tanner — but, innocent or guilty, here they come in single file, man behind man, and each man's hands upon the shoulders of the man in front of him — a human chain, with each man's hands locked to the other's shoulder.

Behold the Lockstep! A beautiful sight. One to warm the heart.

Six hundred men with closely cropped heads. Six hundred men in striped suits known as "zebras." Striped like animals, tamed like animals, obedience wrung from them, as is the case with animals, through fear.

Left, right — left, right — walk the Lockstep! — left, right — left, right. Each man's hands raised against the world but not against his fellow-criminal. Brothers in crime — hands upon shoulders — brother with brother — unite them closely — links in the chain of crime — the human touch from man to man — the touch of fellowship and brotherhood.

Dinner hour. Time for our meal. Into the hall we march for our bowl of warm salt-water disguised as soup, and our portion of stale bread; and, as we enter, we remove our hands from each other's shoulders and file past the hall-men with their trays of bread. There they stand in their striped suits, low-browed, ugly, and ferocious, as befits beasts appointed to lord it over other beasts; and beside the tray-men stands Fish, club in hand, prepared to settle any dispute respecting rations, or to lame or break the hand of any hungry wretch who seeks to grasp more than his due.

I reach the tray, and stretch out my hand for my portion of bread; and, as I do so, the club darts at me like the claw of a jungle-beast, and descends upon my right arm.

"Oh!" I cry aloud, feeling the pain shooting through me and racking my frame. I see Fish grinning at me, and hear him say: "Don' like de grub, heh?" and I see the tray-men laughing at me; and I hear the laughter of the line of striped beasts behind me; and within me the beast rises and tempts me to strike that grinning face. But, fortunately, I control myself in time; and the next moment I am pushed forward by the hungry wretches behind me, and soon I am compelled to resume my work, with nothing in my stomach but the salt-water which is miscalled soup.

In the evening, when Fish brings our meals to our cell, and I observe, with a sinking heart, that there is no portion of bread reserved for me, I approach him with subdued de-



meanor, for I am faint with hunger, and am prepared to grovel in the dust before his fishy eyes.

"Say, Fish!" I call to him, trying to smile with affected amusement, "I don't t'ink I spoiled me stummick wit' over-eatin' to-day. W'en am I goin' te git some grub?"

"I t'ought ye didnen' like et."

"I t'ought so, too; but I changed me mind."

"Did che? Well, maybe ye'll git some in de mornin'."

In the morning I receive my portion of bread, and receive it thankfully, and eat it voraciously. And thereafter I recognise Fish as an overlord to whom I must do homage if I would have my imprisonment rendered endurable. So I greet him with hypocritical good-humour, and stifle my repugnance to his personality, and in divers other respects indicate, by my conduct, that I am subdued, and that I have learned the first lesson which the prison impresses upon its inmates — submission.

But my cellmate, the Tanner, is not subdued. He insists that it is a prisoner's privilege to communicate with his family, and persists in demanding his rights.

"Ain't an American citizen got any rights w'en he's wrongfully put in jail?"

"Is ye got any dough te hire a lawyer?"

"No," answers the Tanner dejectedly.

"Is ye got any honey fer Fish an' de rest o' dem?"

"No."

"Den ye may jist as well unde'stan' now as latch dat a prisoner wit'out dough in his docket's ain' got no rights. So shet yer jaw, an' give us a rest."

"But my wife an' the kid!" pursues the Tanner, not heeding Bill's injunction. "She'll be worryin' all the time, not hearin' from me. It ain't right. It ain't right." He paces the cell, and clasps and unclasps his hands nervously. "It'll kill her — waitin' to hear from me an' not gettin' any



letter. Wot'll the poor girl think? She'll think I went an' left 'er, an' she so delicate! — O Gawd! I'll go crazy if I don' hear from her.— Fish! Fish!”

He is at the grating, trying to shake the bars, as he shouts for the hall man.

“Fish! Fish!”

“Wot d'ye want?” queries a convict who is engaged in mopping the floor.

“I want Fish,” answers the Tanner in a quavering voice.

“Well, w'y de hell don' ye go out an' buy some? Dis ain' no fish-market.” Whereat a hoarse guffaw spreads from cell to cell, and the baffled Tanner retires to his bunk, whereon he seats himself in dejection.

Frequently a convict gets hold of some newspaper, and, after he and his cellmates have read it, gives it to the occupants of the adjoining cell, who, in turn, pass it along to others. Thus we keep in touch with the world without; and thus it happens that, on a certain afternoon, about a month after my conviction, there comes into my hands a newspaper from a neighbouring town, and, after glancing through it casually, I hand it to the Tanner.

It contains few items which interest me, so I pay no further attention to him until a cry startles me.

It is a strange cry — something between a sob, and a shriek, and a gurgle — a cry such as a man might emit in a moment of extreme terror, when he finds the fingers of a strangler at his throat — a cry which begins in a gasp, and rises to a shriek, and ends in a gurgle: and, as I turn, I see the Tanner half rise from his bunk, and then collapse as completely as though he were a scrap of paper that was shrivelling up. His head drops upon his breast, his legs give way, he rolls rather than falls over, and the paper drops from his hands before his body reaches the floor.

My companions rush to his side; and Red Bill calls for "Wateh! — wateh! — quick!" and I take up the cry and shout loudly: "Wateh! Bring up wateh! Man sick in cell numbeh twenty-two." And soon the hall-men come hurrying up, with a pitcher of water in the hands of one of their number, and proceed to fling the contents of the pitcher over the head of the unconscious man: and, after some time, he opens his eyes, and groans; and they put him to bed and send for the doctor.

But, before the doctor arrives, I pick up the paper which I had handed to the Tanner, and glance once again over the news items which I had previously ignored, and soon my eyes rest upon an article reading as follows:

#### WOMAN AND BABE DIE.

#### DESERTED WIFE COMMITS SUICIDE.

Nellie Andrews, wife of John Andrews, sought death for herself and her infant daughter this morning by leaping with the babe into a cistern to the rear of the house number 87 Stinehurst Street.

Mrs. Andrews occupied two rooms on the second floor of the house. Her husband, who is a tanner, has been without employment for several months. About a month ago he deserted his wife and child, leaving them to starve.

## CHAPTER IV

### WHEREIN I AM INSTRUCTED IN THE NOBLE ART OF PICKING POCKETS

"Say, kid," says Red Bill one evening, "was ye eveh a gun (thief)?"

"No."

"Did ye eveh pick gooseberries (steal clothes from the clothes-line)?"

"No."

"Diden' ye eveh hook a pair o' kickers (shoes) w'en ye wanted te hit de road a welt?"

"No."

Bill rubs the stubby growth of red hair upon his cropped head, and stares at me in wonder not unmingled with contempt.

"Sure?"

"No, I neveh hooked anything."

"No kiddin'?"

"Hones', I didn'," I answer shamefacedly, for I am beginning to realize that, after all, a tramp can hardly be considered the social equal of a trained, daring thief. For a month I have been listening in admiration to tales of daring adventure, to stories of battles with police officers, to the recital of exploits wherein pistols and knives played a prominent part; and I am impressed with the comparative tameness of a tramp's existence, and with the meagreness of my experiences in the past.

"So you lived a square, Sunday school life on the road, eh?" sneers Slippery Joe. "You must have been a hell of a hobo."

"I ain' so slow 's ye t'ink," I murmur resentfully, "but I neveh met no trained guns. Dey was on'y make-believers — not de real kind like you."

The tribute implied in my speech apparently soothes Slippery Joe, for the shadow of a smile flits over his features as he remarks: "Well, you're not a bad sort o' kid, and I think if you'd have a little practice you'd be a pretty good help in our line."

A grunt from Green Tom rivets his companion's attention upon the heavy-faced gentleman with the little, gleaming eyes.

"What are you grunting about?" queries Slippery Joe, turning his hard grey eyes upon his companion.

"He ain't got the look of a gun. Too much of a now-I-lay-me-down-to-sleep sort o' look."

"Oh, that'll come — that'll come soon. Give the kid a chance. By the time he's mugged (photographed for the Rogues' Gallery) and serves his bit (term in prison) he'll look as tough as the rest of them. Guns ain't made in a day."

"I guess me phiz looks tough anough," I declare with conviction; and Red Bill pats me upon the shoulder and says: "Ye kin bet yer life on dat. Ye got de makin' of as good a trained gun (expert thief) as eveh wuz, an' Red Bill sez et, as knows. All ye needs is a teacheh as kin train ye propeh, an' I don' care weddeh ye're a yegg-man (tramp thief), porch-climbeh (second story thief) or a moll-buzzeh (one who picks the pockets of women) so long as ye loins de ropes an' loins 'em well."

"There's money in it, my boy," says Slippery Joe. "When a gun makes a good haul he's staked for a while



and can blow himself to a good time like a lord. He can —”

“Don’ listen to ’em, Sam,” cries the Tanner earnestly. “Don’ listen to ’em. They’re tryin’ to lead you to the devil.”

He has risen from his bunk in great excitement, and shakes his clenched fist in the face of Slippery Joe as he utters his words of warning. Red Bill tells him gruffly to shut up, and Green Tom advises him to hold his jaw; but he pays no heed to them as he continues:

“Et’s prison, an’ the fear o’ prison, an’ the cops afteh ye all the time, an’ no rest day or night, an’ a black name w’ile ye live, an’ a mis’rable end. Don’ listen to ’em, me boy. They’re tryin’ to lead ye to hell.”

“Who the hell asked you for advice?” snaps Slippery Joe.

“’Scuse me,” says Red Bill, standing before the Tanner and eyeing him mockingly. “I didn’ know I had de honoh o’ bein’ in de same pen wit’ a ministeh. I hopes ye won’ fe’git us w’en ye gives a pink tea to de ladies o’ de congregation. Green Tom’s jes’ dyin’ fer a infitation; an’ Slippery Joe an’ me won’ be able te sleep till we visits yer congregation an’ jines in de pray’rs.”

The sanctimonious expression upon his face is so droll, and his manner is so amusing, that we all smile at the Tanner’s discomfiture as he turns away, mumbling to himself that he’s had his say, an’ if I don’ care to heed ’im that’s my lookout. But his words have had the effect of closing the mouths of the three rogues for the time being, and, though they look at him surlily, they do not venture to revert to the subject for several days.

Truly, my imprisonment and my intercourse with these representatives of the Powers That Prey, are not without effect. I am learning rapidly to emulate them, and to

prove myself worthy of my tutors. And they, perceiving my interest in their exploits, proceed to subtly instil into me the poison of their knowledge — to elucidate the methods whereby they arrange their “frame-ups” upon the streets so that the prospective victim may readily be preyed upon; to introduce me to the “mob” of three or four or more men who usually travel together; to explain the methods of the “tool” in picking the pocket, and of the “stalls,” who are his confederates, and who place the victim in such a position that the “tool” may operate successfully.

“S’pose you an’ me is in a street car,” says Red Bill, “or on a train, or on de race-track, or anyw’ere w’ere dere’s a crowd, an’ I catches on to a guy as looks good te me. You git behin’ de guy an’ begin crowdin’ ez dough ye wan’s te push yer way t’rough de crowd until, one way or anodder, ye manage to crowd de guy square against me left shouldeh. I got a ovehcoat on me left arm ef et’s winteh, or a rain-coat or a linen dusteh ef et’s summeh, or a newspapeh any season o’ de yeah, fer a cover. Well, ez soon ez de guy’s placed, I stretch me right han’ across, an’ feel o’ his pocket, coverin’ me right arm an’ han’ wit’ de coat on me oddeh arm, or wit’ de newspapeh. W’ile I’m doin’ dat, you stan’ jes’ behind de pocket so no one in de rear’ll git on te de job w’ile me han’s is busy.”

“But won’ he feel yer han’s in his pockets?” I query.

My three companions smile in amusement.

“Gee! but you’re an innocent one, kid,” says Slippery Joe; then he adds amiably: “It’s just this way, my boy. You stand here, and I stand on your right side like this, and Green Tom will stand behind you, and I’ll show you how it’s done.”

We take up our respective positions upon the floor of the cell, while the dusk of evening gathers about us, and the

guards light the gas in the hall below, and some prisoner in the first tier, convicted of burglary, raises his voice in "My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing," as though the ten years of imprisonment stretching before him were but the conjuration of a dream.

"Here, kid! you take this hunk of bread that I didn't finish, and put it in your pocket. That'll be your pocket-book. Now," continues Slippery Joe, his dark eyes gleaming above his sallow cheeks, "I'll teach you something, my cove, that you'll remember, if you expect to be a trained dip some day." He divests himself of his coat, and flings it over his left arm, and stands beside me, with face turned from me.

"You see, I'm not looking at you. If you should discover that you've been robbed, and I should make a get-away (escape) and afterwards be pinched by the cop, you won't be able to identify me, for you don't see my face while I'm operating. Now we're both standing in a crowded car, and I'm pressed against your right side, with my left arm close to your right side. Now — I take my right hand —"

"W'y don' ye take yer left hand? Et's closer to me pocket dan yer right hand."

"That's just the reason I don't use it. If I were to use my left hand, the chances are that you'd feel some movement of the muscles of the arm or of the hand that's crowded against your side. I leave that arm quiet, doing nothing but holding my overcoat or a newspaper to hide my right hand while it's making a touch. Now my right hand is hiding under the coat, and is stretched across to your pocket. Now I'm feeling your hip-pocket to find out whether your pocketbook is in it. See how lightly I press it? You scarcely feel it. My touch is so light that you either do not feel it at all, or you imagine that you're



being jostled by the crowd. It takes but a moment to satisfy me that you've nothing in your hip-pocket. Now I'm at your right trouser-pocket. Ah! I have located your pocketbook. But you are standing up straight, squarely balanced on both feet, and, as a result, the lips of your pocket are drawn close together. I can't insert my fingers without attracting your attention. It will be necessary to induce you to change your position before I can operate. I therefore signal to the stall who is behind us."

A low-toned clearing of the throat, followed by a guttural sound, appears to be the signal for which his confederate is waiting; for the next moment the hand of Green Tom is exerting a gentle pressure upon my right shoulder.

"Now, kid," murmurs Green Tom in my ear, "I wan's te read a papeh, or do sometin' dat'll gimme a 'scuse fer raisin' me han' up te yer shouldeh. We's in a crowd, ye know, an', o' course, I'm so jammed in I ain' got room te hol' de papeh in front o' me, so I gotta raise me han's te hole et up so's I kin read et. An' ez I hold et up, w'y, o' course I gotta rest me han' on yer shouldeh a little w'ile, an' we'll see wot'll happen."

I stand there quietly, awaiting further developments, while the hand of Green Tom continues to press down gently upon my right shoulder. After a few moments, I find myself gradually yielding to the pressure, and, ere I am aware of it, my right shoulder has sunk down, and I have relaxed the muscles of my legs.

"Now," resumes Slippery Joe, "you have changed your position, and, in so doing, have thrown open the lips of your pocket."

"An' now, I s'pose, yer han's going' in," I say grimly.

"Ye're wrong there, kid."

"A trained dip neveh woiks wit' his han's," says Red



Bill contemptuously, as though surprised at my ignorance.  
“He woiks wit’ his fingers.”

“A professional thief doesn’t put his hand into your pocket when you’re in a crowd, and pull out your wallet. He woiks with his thumb and forefinger upon the lining—like this.”

He still stands beside me, with his coat over his left arm, and his face turned from me as though I were the last person in the world to interest him, while the fingers of his right hand work unobtrusively under cover of the coat.

“Well, wot’s nex’ in de game?” I inquire.

“Don’t you feel anything?”

“No.”

“I’m working your pocket.”

“How?”

“I’m gradually drawing up the lining with my thumb and forefinger. In about a minute I’ll have the slice of bread which represents the pocketbook.—Ah! you felt that.”

I had indeed felt a gentle tug at the bread; but the fingers which were at work upon my pocket were so dexterous and so light that I should probably have not paid the slightest heed to their movements if I had indeed been standing amid a throng.

“If I conclude that you are getting leary (suspicious) I clear my throat again, and signal to the stall that the game is to be dropped. But in order to teach you the ropes, we’ll suppose that you’re not getting wise to what I’m doing, so I’ll continue with my work. And now I want you to look sharp, and to act just as you would if your leather were actually being lifted.”

As he concludes, I feel a very light and almost imperceptible touch upon my right side, and as I triumphantly clap my hand to my trousers pocket in order to surprise

him at work, I find, to my astonishment, that his hand has been withdrawn, and that the bread has also vanished from my pocket; and, as I observe the triumphant smile upon his face, I suddenly seize him by the arm and cry: "But I'll nab ye wit' de goods on, Mister Smarty. I got ye dead to rights even dough I am a rube in a crowd. Gimme me me pocketbook!"

"I haven't it," he says, with a note of triumph in his voice.

"Yes, ye have."

"No, I haven't."

"Well, den, Green Tom's got et."

"Not guilty," declares that worthy, with a smile upon his big, red face which causes his little, gleaming eyes to pop inward forthwith to join the numerous optics which have sought refuge in the recesses of his head.

I turn in bewilderment to Red Bill, who is standing in the rear of the cell, with a broad smile upon his bearded face.

"W'ere is et?" I ask.

"Here et is," says the red-headed individual addressed, and, as he speaks, he draws the slice of bread from his coat pocket, and exhibits it to my astonished gaze.

"How'd et get dere?" I query in perplexity, whereat the trio shake with laughter, and slap their knees, and vow that I'm the greenest guy that ever lived, and that they haven't had such fun in a long time. "Oh, lordy!" laughs Red Bill; "ain't dat rich?" "Ho! ho! ho!" gurgles Green Tom in hilarious ecstasy. "Ha! ha! ha!" roars Slippery Joe. And all enjoy themselves hugely, except the Tanner.

He sits upon his bunk in the semi-darkness (for the only light which enters the cell is that which comes from the gas-jets below) and eyes us soberly; but we have

grown accustomed to his disapproving glance, and, having never admitted him to our fraternity, have long since learned to ignore him.

"Let me explain, kid," says Slippery Joe, when his laughter has subsided, "so that you may know the ropes when you get to be a trained gun. When the dip snags a poke (steals a pocketbook) he hands it to the stall so that if the fellow that's touched takes a tumble and makes a holler, and the elbow (detective) pinches the dip, he won't be taken with the goods. But it isn't safe for the stall who's been standing close to the fellow to keep it, either, so he passes it to another of the mob, who skips off as fast as he can. If it's in a car, he gets off, as any passenger might, without arousing suspicion; or, if he's elsewhere, he just elbows his way through the crowd and escapes. Then, if the dip, or the front stall, or the rear stall, should be copped (arrested) nothing will be found on them, and they'll be let go at the hearing. Oh, it's so dead easy that sometimes I'm ashamed to take the leather."

And here he winks so knowingly, and I find the rogue's talk so diverting, that I chuckle in amusement, and consider myself extremely fortunate in having such pleasant companions as cellmates.

## CHAPTER V

### WHAT TRANSPIRED IN MY CELL AND HOW THE GUARDS ATTACKED NUMBER 587

Fish the Guard does not like the Tanner, and the Tanner detests Fish the Guard.

We all detest the guard man, with his sinuous glide along the balcony, and his stealthy approach to the open cells, and his eavesdropping tactics; but whereas the others merely dislike the man, the Tanner hates him with deep and bitter hatred which refuses to be subdued.

For to him the Tanner attributes his misfortunes; to his inhuman refusal to permit the Tanner to communicate with the distraught little wife who was grieving her life away, the prisoner attributes the death of wife and babe. And the look which he casts at times upon his jailor is filled with a malevolence which he makes no effort to conceal.

But Fish does not care. He continues to glide noiselessly across the iron balcony which is his pond, and to nibble at the fragments of conversation which float out from the cells, and to appear unexpectedly at the grated doors, with his fishy eyes leering upon the squirming eels within.

"Oho!" he chuckles one morning, as he appears with our breakfast, "an' how is me deah friend Numbeh 587?"

Number 587 is the Tanner; and the solicitous inquiry is addressed to the Tanner with the evident intent of provoking him to one of those outbursts of indignation which appeal so powerfully to the humorous Mr. Fish.



"How is me deah friend?" he repeats with a smirk, pressing his face against the iron bars until his receding chin and his retreating forehead appear to merely continue the lines of his nose in order to perfect his resemblance to the finny tribe.

"None o' yer damn business!" retorts the Tanner, flaring up at sight of the fishy eyes staring in at him.

"Now don' say dat, me good friend Numbeh 587," pursues the guard tauntingly. "Ye know —"

"I ain't no friend o' yours, an' never will be, an' I hope your soul'll rot in hell." And the Tanner's eyes burn as he glares at the guard, and he clenches his fist as he steps to the door angrily.

But Fish the Guard is a humorous fellow, and loves his whisky and his jest; and, having partaken of a liberal quantity of the one ere breakfast, he must have the other also in order to fit himself for his day's work. So Mr. Fish sneers at the Tanner, and retorts that if his soul goes to hell he'll be glad to take a letter to the Tanner's wife and kid who'll be sure to be there by this time.

The Tanner's face grows flushed and then pales, and for an instant he stands there, gritting his teeth, while his face turns very white. The next moment, however, he has thrust forth his arms between the iron bars of the door, and has grasped the humorous Mr. Fish by the throat; and the humorous Mr. Fish is gasping in a way to remind one of the actions of a somewhat different kind of fish (and one lacking in humor) when the fisherman draws it out of its element and flings it upon the land.

For, strange to say, the grasp of the Tanner's hands upon his throat appears to drive all the delicious humor out of the humorous Mr. Fish, and causes him to abandon, for once, that mocking spirit which constitutes one of his main charms — so that, of a sudden, the humorous Mr.

Fish ceases to be humorous, and threatens to grow apoplectic instead.

As the brand of humor retailed by the guard has never appealed very strongly to me or to my companions, we wait a moment ere hastening to the guard's rescue, in order to permit the effervescent gaiety of our jailor to expend itself; but, as his round, fishy eyes appear to be on the verge of popping outward (thereby differing from the orbs of Green Tom, which invariably pop inward) we deem it advisable to hasten to his rescue, and accordingly grasp the arms of our cellmate, and force him to release his hold, and pull him back to the rear of the cell.

Fish the Guard, released from the grasp of the irate prisoner, leans weakly against the door, breathing heavily, and looking miserable as he shakes his fist before the door and hisses: "I'll git square wit' ye fer dis! I'll git square wit' ye!" And a volley of oaths burst from him as he walks away.

"Ye're a fool fer hittin' a screw (guard)," says Green Tom to the Tanner, "but I admire yer spunk in shuttin' off his wind. I guess ye'll have de pleasure o' gittin' a dose o' solitary fer a change, wit' bread an' watch, an' not much o' eedeh, but a darn sight more watch 'n bread."

The prospect of solitary confinement, however, does not appall the Tanner. He seats himself upon his bunk, and stares moodily before him, as though he were visualizing the wife who had vainly been waiting to hear from him, and finally, in despair, had ended her life; and he remains seated upon his bunk until the door of the cell is unlocked, and we all go forth to our labor.

At noon we return for our dinner, and then march forth again; and just before dusk we end our day's work, and are locked up in our cells for the night.

"Well, it looks as though you escaped solitary this

time," remarks Slippery Joe to the Tanner, as Fish the Guard, having brought our supper, slinks silently away.

"I don't care. They can do what they want with me, fer all I care," says the Tanner moodily.

"If he had squealed, you'd have heard from the warden long ago."

"I guess he didn't have de cheek to split on ye, seein' he got wot wuz comin' to 'im anyhow," says Red Bill.

The night comes on and, with the night, comes Fish the Guard, to announce that, owing to the arrival of numerous prisoners that day, it would be necessary to change the cells of some of the convicts temporarily, so that the congestion in the prison may be relieved. And, in order to relieve the congestion, he takes from our cell the three pickpockets, and transfers them to other cells which are more crowded than was ours.

We all grumble at this change; but it is useless to remonstrate with Fish the Guard, for our captor is not in a genial mood to-day, and his scowl is not pleasant to look upon.

The Tanner and I await the arrival of our new cellmates, but we wait in vain. It never occurs to us that the guard may have had some ulterior motive in transferring our companions to other cells, so we retire for the night, and crawl into our bunks, and go to sleep.

It must have been close to midnight when I am awakened by the turning of a key and the creaking of the cell-door as it swings open; and, as I raise my head, I discern the figure of Fish, accompanied by two guards, entering the cell.

I am lying in the upper bunk, and the Tanner is asleep in the lower one — sound asleep, for I hear him snoring.

"Wake up!" cries Fish, approaching the lower bunk; and the bed creaks as though he were shaking its occupant. "Wake up!" he repeats, with an oath.



“Wot’s the matter?” queries the Tanner sleepily.

“Git up!”

The bed creaks again, as though the prisoner were sitting up; and again the Tanner queries (but this time less sleepily than before) “Wot’s the matter?”

“Git up, I say!”

“Wot d’ye want?”

“We wan’s *you*,” and, at the words, the three men grasp my companion, and drag him from his bed.

“Here, you! Stop that!” cries the Tanner, struggling as they fling him to the floor.

I lie quietly in my bunk, pretending to be asleep, for I am filled with terror at this midnight invasion, and at the actions of the three ruffians; and my fear is intensified as I catch sight of a wooden club, about three feet long, in the hand of Fish, and two other clubs upon the floor of the cell, where Fish’s companions had dropped them in dragging the prisoner from his bed. The Tanner, too, perceives them, and, at the sight, springs to his feet with a cry of terror. And, as he does so, I catch a glimpse of his bare feet, and catch the note of fear in his voice as he says hoarsely:

“Wot d’ye want o’ me? D’ye wan’ to kill me?”

“Yes, damn ye!” hisses Fish, and, as he speaks, he raises the club, and strikes the defenceless man a heavy blow upon the arm, causing him to fall against the side of the cell, where he stands a few moments, propped up by the stone wall.

A few moments only, for the other guards are at him also, belaboring him with their weapons; and again Fish raises the club, and this time it descends upon the Tanner’s head, and, with a shriek of pain which rings through the prison, the unfortunate man drops with a thud to the floor.

“Ye’ve killed him!” mutters one of the guards.



"No I ain't, but I'm goin' to," and again the weapon descends upon the unconscious form upon the floor.

"Cheese et! Let up! He's putty near done for," whispers the other guard warningly.

But Fish takes no heed. He is blood-mad, and the sight of the red stream (how dark it looks in the semi-gloom!) trickling down his victim's cheek, and issuing from a dozen wounds about the Tanner's body, serves but to fan his fury.

"Let up, or we'll all be caged," says one of the two guards who have accompanied Fish, as he slinks to the door, followed by his companion.

Fish is about to strike again, when suddenly his eye is arrested by some slight movement on my part, and in a moment he is at my bed, with his club in his hand.

"Makin' b'lieve, heh?" he snarls. "Closin' yer peepers an' makin' b'lieve ye're dopey, heh? so's ye kin peach on me! Well, I'll close yer peepers for good, damn ye!" And, with the words, the weapon descends upon me.

I shrink back, and stretch out my hand to shield my head, and, as I do so, the club strikes my fingers and crushes them.

A loud cry of pain breaks from me. At the cry, Fish suddenly appears to awaken to a realization of the fact that possibly he is not above the law, even though he is a jailor, for he gazes about him furtively, and hides his weapon beneath his coat, as he slinks to the door and locks it noiselessly. Then, softly as a fish which has devoured its victim and has satisfied its appetite, he swims along the iron balcony which is his pond, and glides down to the depths far below, where his companions stand waiting, like rank weeds at the bottom of a stagnant pool.

The pain in my hand is excruciating. The blood gathers upon my fingers, and stains the bedding, and I toss

about, and moan, not knowing which way to turn in my agony.

"Wot's the matter? Did they manhandle ye?" comes a voice from the adjoining cell, but I can only groan in reply. The other prisoners are quiet. Most of them have heard the sounds which have issued from my cell, and have formed their conclusions as to what was happening and have remained discreetly quiet, cowed by fear of the armed ruffians.

For they know that the law of the prison is Obedience, and the power that rules is Fear; and that it may be well enough for the captured savage of the jungle to propitiate his gods, but that the civilized man in captivity must propitiate his guards alone.

So there is silence now throughout the prison, while the night passes, and I toss about in agony, and no one comes to my relief.

I had feared at first that the Tanner was dead, but I am soon reassured by his deep breathing. A peculiar breathing it is, a stertorous breathing, accompanied by a rasping sound, and by a rattle in the throat, and I marvel at his loud snores, but conclude that he is recovering consciousness, and is in a condition bordering upon sleep.

The hours drag along, and still no one comes. I rise, and dress myself as well as I can, and seat myself upon the Tanner's bed, and nurse my battered hand, and am half mad with pain. After a while I walk to the door, moaning in my misery, and supporting in my right hand the battered, bloody fingers of my left; and, as I gaze below, I behold one of the guards who had attacked the Tanner seated at a table, and reading.

I hear the grating of a door leading into the hall below, and then Fish comes into view, accompanied by the other guard, and the trio converse for a minute. Then Fish

and his companion approach the lower tier of cells, and the next moment I hear them ascending the iron stairway which leads upward.

I crawl hastily into my bed, and cover myself, and feign sleep.

The steps draw nearer, and stop before the door of my cell; and then the door swings back, and the villains enter.

Through my half-closed eyelids I see them stealthily approach the form upon the floor and bend down; and then I hear a startled exclamation from Fish's companion, and hear Fish whisper in terror "He's done for!" and they rise, and stare at each other in silence, and their attitude betokens fear.

"Wot'll we do?" It is Fish's companion, a man named Sabel, who puts the query.

"Peach on de kid."

As he whispers the words, he hurries to the door, and the other after him, and the next moment the door is again locked, and they are slinking along the balcony, and down the iron stairway, and soon I hear their footsteps in the hall below.

I surmise that they are conferring with the other guard. After half an hour I hear footsteps again approaching, but this time the door is not opened. Something is thrust into the cell between the bars of the door; something which falls to the floor with a sound as of wood; and then the steps again retreat.

I crawl out of the bed, and pick up the object which has been introduced into the cell, and find that it is the bloody club with which Fish had attacked us.

As I hold it in my uninjured hand, wondering at the guard's object in flinging it into the cell, I become aware of the fact that the Tanner has ceased to snore. I approach him, and find that I can no longer detect his breath-



ing. I put my hand to his brow and find that cold drops of perspiration cover it, and that his face is singularly cold. I start back in affright, as it suddenly dawns upon me that the sound which I mistook for a snore was the death rattle, and that I am alone in the cell with the body of a murdered man at my feet, and the bloody instrument of death in my hand.

“Peach on de kid.” What did Fish mean? Why should they inform on me? What had I done to warrant any charge against me, or to form the basis of any complaint to the warden? Would they dare charge the Tanner and myself with having attacked them? Would they claim that they struck us in self-defence?

I approach the door, and deposit the club upon the floor whence I had taken it; then I put on my clothes, and tie my handkerchief around my battered hand as well as I can, and walk the cell in agony, praying for daylight to appear.

Daylight comes at last, but slowly, as though hesitating to enter my cell and to gaze upon the bloody figure upon the floor. When it does finally draw near, it halts its lagging steps upon the sills of the windows in the big hall, and rests there for some time ere daring to approach my cell. But after a time it comes closer, and then enters, and draws the curtains of night from the face of the murdered man.

The prison rouses itself, and yawns, and hums, and murmurs, and bustles; and the guards busy themselves in the hall, and the trustees are released from their cells and proceed to mop the floor, and the prisoners shake up their beds and make a pretence at tidying their cells, and another day enters into the grey and sordid lives of the men behind the bars.

If the Tanner had died a natural death, I should long



ere this have sent my voice out into the hall to notify the guards of my cellmate's demise; but the deed that I witnessed in the nighttime, and the knowledge that the man was murdered by three of the guards, have stricken me dumb, and I am afraid to open my lips lest I draw down upon my head the vengeance of the ruffians whose power over the lives of the unfortunate inmates inspires me with terror.

So I pace my cell nervously, and await developments; and my heart quakes as I hear Fish's steps draw near, and see him stop before my cell with a tray containing several cups of coffee and an equal number of portions of bread.

He peers into the cell, and leers at me as usual; and then he unlocks the door and enters, and places two cups of coffee and two portions of bread upon the floor, and says: "Well, how did ye sleep las' night?" and adds: "It's about time Numbeh 587 gits up fer breakfas' or de coffee'll git cold."

He smiles at me so coolly and mockingly as he says this, that I gaze at him in bewilderment, astounded at his cold-blooded audacity, and wondering what scheme is germinating in his degenerate brain. And, even as I wonder, he approaches the Tanner's body, and then pauses, while a look of horror spreads over his face, and "Blood!" he cries in a loud, shrill voice, "Blood! W'ere did dat blood come from?"

The next moment he is kneeling beside the body of his victim, and is feeling the cold hand of the dead man, and then he rises, and rushes to the door, and flings it open, and shouts down to the guards and the trusties below.

"Help!" he cries. "De kid's killed Numbeh 587. Come up! He's killed 'im wit' a club!"

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CLEVER WARDEN, AND HOW HE ADVISES ME TO PLEAD GUILTY TO A CRIME I DID NOT COMMIT

The guards come rushing up to the cell (and among them are Fish's accomplices) and all are overwhelmed with horror at my bloody deed. The warden comes up hastily, and directs a guard to telephone to the county physician; and soon the country physician arrives and, after examining the Tanner, solemnly pronounces the man to be dead; but as we all knew that long ago the announcement does not produce the effect anticipated by the doctor, whereat he is somewhat crestfallen, but relieves his disappointment by staring at me very hard and assuring me that I shall swing for it — which appears to be the opinion of the guards also.

I am taken downstairs, closely guarded by two men who accompany me, one on each side, and am ushered into the warden's office.

"Sit down!" says the warden. His name is Bracken, and he is a tall, broad-shouldered man, with a long white beard, and cold grey eyes, and a crooked nose which was broken in a saloon brawl many years ago.

I seat myself in front of the desk at which he is seated, and the two guards who had accompanied me are directed by him to withdraw, which they do forthwith.

"Now," says Mr. Bracken, when we are left alone, "tell me why you killed Number 587."

"I didn'."

"Didn't what?"

"Diden' kill 'im."

Mr. Bracken smiles as he opens a drawer of his desk, and takes out a cigar which he proceeds to light. It is a sceptical smile, a knowing smile, an eloquent smile, a smile that imports superior wisdom and concealed knowledge. It says as plainly as words: "You can't pull the wool over my eyes, sir, for I've learned a thing or two and I've drawn my conclusions."

"So you didn't kill him?" queries the warden smilingly.

"No, sir."

"See here, young fellow." He abandons his smile, and, resting his elbow upon his desk, shakes his finger warningly as he continues, "do you know that you're in a pretty tight pinch?"

I nod my head, and faintly murmur, "Yes, sir."

"Now, you can take my advice, or you can leave it, whichever you prefer; but if you take my advice you'll make a clean breast of the whole thing and tell me the truth."

"Yes, sir." I nod my head miserably in acquiescence.

"Why did you kill him?"

"I diden'."

He frowns upon me at my persistent denial of guilt, and his eyes fire up angrily.

"Well, then, who did?"

"Fish an' Sabel an' anoddeh screw (guard)."

"What!"

The warden leaps to his feet, and stares at me in consternation, and his cigar falls unheeded to the floor.

"You don't mean —?"

"Dey did 'im up wit' a club — las' night — I seen et."

And then I relate all that I witnessed, and exhibit my battered hand as evidence of its truth. He paces the floor nervously, stroking his white beard at intervals, and appearing to be greatly perturbed.

"Damn those guards!" he cries, when I have finished my recital. "Haven't they any sense in their heads? Don't they know that I'm responsible for the discipline in this place? Why, boy," he adds, standing before me, and staring at me with an injured air, "if the Board of Freeholders hear of this I'll lose my job!"

But I am not concerned about the Board of Freeholders or the warden's job. I am relieved at the thought that my story is credited, and that I have dispelled the suspicion which had, for a time, attached to me.

"Describe the guard who was with Fish and Sabel," says Mr. Bracken; and, when I have done so, he declares that the third man is Johnson, and, ringing a bell, he commands the deputy who appears at the door to summon the three guards whom I have accused: then, opening a door which leads into an adjoining room, he directs me to wait therein until he summons me.

He closes the door, and I find myself in a narrow room, with a table and chair in the centre, and a grated window at one end. Soon I hear voices in the room which I have left; so, tiptoeing to the door, I press my ear against it, and listen.

"What's this I hear about you men?" begins the warden. "What have you been doing?"

"Nahtin' dat I knows of." This from Fish.

"Oh, quit it! You're a fine set of screws, you are — pummelling a man to death, and a witness in the same cell watching it all. You're a fine set of screws!"

"There wasen' no w—" says Sabel, when Fish inter-



rupts him to inquire of Mr. Bracken what he means, and to whom he refers, and what have they to do with the Tanner's death.

"Oh, quit your fooling," says the warden wearily. "Don't try to pull wool over my eyes. I'm no baby. That kid didn't get his hand smashed by pounding it against the wall in his sleep. And I'd like to know why you transferred three of those ducks to another cell: can you tell me that?"

"I t'ought," stammers Fish, "dat ye'd need more room fer de guys wot wuz comin' te-day, an' so —"

"— And so you decided to transfer them without orders from me, or notifying me, or entering the change in the book! You must think me a pretty soft one to swallow any yarn like that. But what I'd like to know is this: when you started to clean out the cell so that there would be no one there to squeal on you, why the devil didn't you take the kid out, too, you damn fools?"

Receiving no reply, the warden proceeds to answer his own query, and continues.

"I'll tell you why. Because you're just like all the other crooks here. You do most of your thinking before the job, but not all; and you haven't enough brains to realize that a crook has got to do *all* his thinking in advance if he doesn't want to be caught. You got the old guys out of the way, but you took your chances with the kid. And now he's going to peach on you; and before you three are much older you'll be dancing a hornpipe in the air, with a rope around your necks."

"But we didn' do nahtin'," protests Sabel, in frightened tones. "S'elp me Gawd! we didn' touch —"

"I'll lose my job if this comes out," declares the warden earnestly. "Some of the members of the Board are just

aching for an excuse to fire me, and now —" he pushes back his chair, and rises angrily — "you damn curs are just giving them the excuse they've been hunting for, and so help me God, I'll do my level best to send you three shrimps to the gallows where you belong."

"But, Mr. Bracken —" it is the voice of the third guard, Johnson, and it is trembling with fear — "I didn' do anything. I went in with Fish but I left before —"

"Ye lie!" snaps Fish; "if I hang, you've got te hang too." Then, changing his voice to one of tearful entreaty, he addresses the warden piteously. "We didn' none of us do nahtin'. De kid did et, s'elp me Gawd! Dey had a scrap tegeddeh, alone, an' nobody seed et, an' de kid done 'im up, an' I didn' know nahtin' till I comes in wit' de grub an' seed de stiff."

"Yes," declares Sabel earnestly, "we didn' touch 'im. De kid done et, an' now he's tryin' te save his skin by snitchin' (informing) on us."

"Sure he done et," asseverates Fish eagerly, "s'elp —"

"Shut up!" The warden's voice is peremptory as he cuts off further protestations of innocence and becomes absorbed in thought. For several minutes all is quiet — the three ruffians are silent, and the warden is silent, and the room is as quiet as though it were empty. When Bracken speaks again, his voice is altered. Its angry and indignant accents are succeeded by the calm, measured tones of ordinary conversation as he queries mildly:

"So you think it was the kid, eh? Well, of course I don't know anything about it, and your story is just as plausible as his. I'd hate to believe that any of the guards who work under me would do anything of that sort; and, by George!" he cries, pounding the table with his fist, "I don't believe it. But —" and here his voice almost drops to a whisper — "it's possible that while those two

were fighting it out last night, some of the other guys (especially in the nearby cells) may have heard some of the noise; and perhaps it would be well for you three to go the rounds and kinder explain things generally so that, when the district attorney comes, there won't be too many different stories told. You might pass the word around that it'll be best for all concerned if all the boys tell the truth, and — the same truth."

He utters the latter words so significantly, and with such a note of cunning in his voice, that I begin to comprehend the import of his utterance.

"Of course, you understand," he pursues in the same even tones, "that I don't want any lies here. I want the facts, the true facts, and I know you fellows will supply them. If I thought for one moment that the kid was telling the truth, I'd have you three under lock and key in no time, even though it *would* cost me my job to have such things happening here; but I see now that he was simply trying to shove the blame onto you to save his own hide, but I guess it won't work — it won't work, eh, boys? There's every reason in the world why I should rather trust the word of my guards than what a white-livered young crook tells me — damn him!"

I hear him rise and walk to the door, which he opens; hear the three murderers cheerfully protest their innocence and awkwardly thank him for his confidence in them, as they file out; then the door is closed, and he approaches the room wherein I have been standing and listening, and opens the door.

"So you've been playing spy!" he cries, as he discovers me standing behind the door. "I thought so. Come in here."

I follow him into his room, and he seats himself at the table, scowling upon me, and eyeing me searchingly.



"Now what have you got to say for yourself, eh? What have you got to say for yourself?"

"I didn't do it," I protest doggedly.

"Of course you didn't. None of them ever do in this place. They're all angels here." Then, suddenly changing his methods, his voice softens, and he speaks to me kindly, and says: "Sit down, Sammy," and I seat myself before him, and listen.

"Sammy," he begins gently, after a short silence, "this is a pretty bad business for all of us, and especially for you, and the only thing to consider now is what you ought to do in order to get out of this the best way possible, and save your neck."

"But I didn't do —"

"Tut! tut!" he interrupts with some asperity. "I don't care whether you did or didn't. I'm in charge of this place, and I intend to stand by my help; and when it comes to their word against the word of any crook in this pen, I'm going to stand by them to the end. Understand?"

I nod my head feebly, and he resumes, in milder tones:

"Now it's just like this. It's the word of a crook against that of three guards; and who do you think is going to be believed — you or they? If you tell the court that these men killed 587, and they deny it, there isn't a soul that'll believe you, and you'll hang as sure as you're standing here this day. But suppose you take it on yourself (and of course I've got to believe them when they say it's so) — suppose you say: 'He attacked me with a club and I defended myself. He tried to kill me. He struck me over the hand and smashed it with the weapon. His attack was so sudden that I didn't have a chance even to call for help. I grabbed the club, and tore it from him, and struck him. I didn't mean to kill him: I only meant to defend



myself.' Why, Sammy, if you tell such a story on the witness stand, there isn't a jury in this land that'll ever convict you. I'll stand by you (seeing that you're telling the truth): we'll all stand by you — and it won't take the jury fifteen minutes to render a verdict of not guilty."

I know in my heart that his profession of interest in my safety is merely a sham. I know that his only motive in endeavoring to induce me to bear the burden of the crime is to shield himself from the criticism which would be aroused if it appeared that the Tanner was murdered by his jailors. But his argument is so plausible, and his promise to stand by me carries with it such assurance of influential support, that I, in my ignorance of criminal procedure, imagine that, under these circumstances, my trial must necessarily be a mere formality, and that my acquittal is assured.

"Well?" he queries, after allowing me a few moments for reflection, "what do you say?"

"All right," I answer, with a deep breath; "I guess et's de on'y t'ing te do."

"Now you're talking like a sensible man," he says, rising, and extending his hand with a pleasant smile. "I'll stand by you — we'll all stand by you — and you'll find you did the wise thing. Shake."

I take his outstretched hand perfunctorily, but he gives mine a hearty clasp, and pats me upon the shoulder, and tells me it'll be all right, and I shouldn't worry, for he'll stand by me. Then, summoning a guard, he directs the latter to conduct me to my cell; and I leave him standing upon the threshold of the room, stroking his white beard, and following me with his eyes.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CLEVER DISTRICT ATTORNEY, AND HOW HE WRINGS THE TRUTH FROM ME

Next morning I am summoned to the warden's office, and am presented to a stranger who is seated near Mr. Bracken, and engaged in earnest conversation with him.

"Sam," says the warden, "this is Mr. Fox, the district attorney, and he wishes to speak to you."

Mr. Fox turns upon me a pair of glasses, behind which sparkle a pair of keen grey eyes, and says that he is glad to meet me. He is a bald-headed young man of about thirty-five, with a clean-shaven face whose youthfulness is in singular contrast to the old and serious look in his bright eyes. A tall young man, rather lank and angular, with narrow white hands, and long thin fingers, and a well poised head which gives him somewhat of an aristocratic bearing. I seat myself in a chair, and await the examination of the district attorney.

"What's your name, Sam?"

"Samuel Smith."

"I don't mean your alias: I mean your true name."

"Dat's me real name."

"Born with it?"

I hesitate a moment, then answer: "No, sir."

"Now give me your true name."

"Samuel Gordin."

"What's your prison record?"

"I neveh wuz in jail befo'."

"Oh, come, now!" says Mr. Fox in jocular tones, smil-

ing upon me. "You know, Sam, I'm not quite a baby, even though I do look young."

Here he beams upon me, and Mr. Bracken advises me to tell the truth, and I stammer that I *am* telling the truth, whereat both smile upon me with a look of incredulity upon their faces.

"Now see here, Sam," pursues Mr. Fox, bending forward. "You might just as well speak the truth, for we'll get your record anyhow before a week is up, and you know you won't gain anything by telling lies to an officer of the court. So I'd advise you to tell the truth."

"I am tellin' de trut'."

"Then why did you give your name as Samuel Smith instead of Samuel Gordin if you had no reason to conceal your true name?"

I cogitate over this problem for some time, and find that I cannot readily answer it, even to myself. I am not given to introspection at this stage of my career, so I wonder vaguely what impulse impelled me to conceal my name when I was arrested.

"I dunno," I reply weakly to the district attorney's query.

"Don't know? Now think a moment, and then answer," he persists.

"I dunno."

"Wasn't it because you had a prison record under your true name?"

"No, sir."

"Then why didn't you give your name if you weren't afraid?"

"I wuz ashamed."

"Ashamed of what?"

I squirm in my seat, and gaze down shamefacedly at the floor.

"Ashamed o' bein' pinched."

"What were you working at before you were arrested?"

"Nahtin'."

"Weren't working?"

"No, sir."

"Were you a tramp?"

"Y-yes, sir."

"How long?"

"Oh, I dunno."

"How long?"

"Eveh since I wuz a kid."

"You weren't ashamed of being a hobo, were you?"

"No, sir."

"And you knew that a hobo was liable to be arrested any day for vagrancy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Most of your friends on the road had been arrested at some time, hadn't they?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you knew that you'd probably be caught some day too — didn't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you say you weren't ashamed of being a hobo?"

"No, sir."

"Then of what were you ashamed when you concealed your real name?"

"I dunno."

The bright eyes stare at me through the shining glasses as though they would pierce my soul; but they find no answer in my voice or in my eyes. I am not given to self-analysis; and I scarcely realize that some stirring of a dormant self-respect, some vague movement of a moral self slumbering within my soul, impelled me to conceal my name upon my arrest: so I can but protest my ignorance



of the motive which inspired my deception except as expressed by me in my blundering and imperfect way.

"Well," says Mr. Fox coldly, finding that I still persist in protesting that I have never heretofore been imprisoned, "I'll have your prison record inside of a week, and then you'll feel sorry that you've lied to me.— Now let's get down to this case. Why did you kill Number 587?"

The change in the character of my examination is so sudden, and the question is so unexpected, that I am off my guard for a moment.

"I didn' kill 'im," I blurt out; and then, perceiving the look of consternation upon the warden's face, I suddenly remember my instructions, and my promise to Mr. Bracken, and, realizing that I have blundered, I flounder about in bewilderment, while the persistent Mr. Fox pursues his inquiry as mercilessly as though I were on the witness stand, and were submitting to cross-examination.

"Didn't kill him, eh? Then what did you mean when you told Mr. Bracken yesterday that you had killed Number 587?"

"I mean I did kill 'im," I murmur lamely; and then, dreading the effects of this admission, I add—"but I didn' mean te do et."

"Then why did you do it?"

"He hit me foist."

"And because he hit you you killed him?"

The keen grey eyes are staring into my own, and his face grows stern and hard as I nod my head; but, ere he can press his advantage, there is a knock at the door, and one of the subordinates from the warden's office enters to announce the arrival of the Black Maria with a load of prisoners.

Mr. Bracken's countenance betrays his irritation at the interruption, and he mutters an oath as he rises and leaves

the room, closing the door behind him, and leaving me alone with the persistent inquisitor.

Now, as I review my past, I realize how much weakness there was in my character at this period of my life, how susceptible I was to the influence of others and of my environment, and of how prone I was to place my dependence upon others rather than upon myself. And, as I sit in the warden's office, I catch some glimmer of this moral weakness within myself, and gaze at the keen-eyed, bald-headed young man with something akin to terror as I realize that the support which the presence of the warden affords me in my efforts at deception has been withdrawn with the closing of the door, and that I must rely upon myself alone to concoct a story which shall seem plausible, and which shall save me from the gallows.

For I have pondered over the advice of Mr. Bracken, and have concluded that my safety demands that I act upon his suggestion and follow his directions. It is evident to me that, by protesting my innocence, and accusing the real malefactors, I should insure my conviction of murder, and should enjoy the satisfaction of expiating my innocence upon the gallows. Truly, it is not wise to invariably tell the truth — especially when, by so doing, one's neck may become subjected to a sudden uncomfortable strain. Wiser is it (so I think as I sit opposite the district attorney and prepare for a resumption of the examination) — wiser is it for a man to walk the streets with a falsehood upon his lips than to dangle from a rope and gasp forth truths.

And yet, what a strange thing is life! Had I possessed the ability to lie consistently, plausibly, and artistically (a difficult thing for any man to do — a feat which but one criminal in a thousand is capable of performing) I should probably have been convicted of manslaughter on

my own testimony. Or, had Mr. Bracken remained in the room, I should probably have stammered forth some narrative which would also have led to my conviction and to imprisonment for a long term of years. But I was not an artistic liar, and Mr. Bracken did not remain in the room, and to these concomitant circumstances I owe my salvation. So, when I viewed the warden's departure with apprehension, I little realized that fate, in depriving me of the moral support which his presence would have afforded me at this crisis, had played me the kindest of tricks, and had preserved my liberty and perhaps my life. What a strange world is this, and how strangely the curses which we invoke confound us with their blessings!

"So you admit that you killed him?" pursues Mr. Fox, upon the departure of the warden.

"Yes, sir."

"And how did you kill him?"

"I hit 'im wit' a club."

"Had you ever before quarrelled with him?"

"No, sir."

"How many were there in your cell?"

"Dere wuz five; but de oddeh t'ree wuz put in diff'ent cells."

"When?"

"De day befaw de fight."

"Day before yesterday?"

"Yeh."

"Who changed their cells?"

"De screw."

"What screw?"

"Fish."

"And when you two were left alone, you started to maul each other?"

"Yes, sir."

"What started the row?"

"Oh, nahtin'. He clubbed me, an' I clubbed him, an' he got de wise of et, dat's all. But I didn' mean te kill 'im."

"I understand that," says Mr. Fox, with some impatience; "but what I want to know now is: What started the row?"

I pause a moment to digest this question, ere replying.

"Oh, et wuzen' much. One woid brought on anoddeh, and de foist t'ing ye know we wuz scrappin' tegeddeh."

"Well, what word brought on another? What did he say, and what did you say?"

"I don' remembeh."

He draws his chair closer to me, and stares straight into my eyes as he scowls upon me and says sternly:

"See here, Sam. You know better than any other man on earth just what was said and done, and what took place within that cell, and, by heavens! if you don't answer my questions truthfully, you'll simply be tightening the noose which is around your neck. Now, are you going to answer, or not?"

"I am answerin'," I protest feebly. "I'm tellin' ye all dat I knows about et."

"You're doing nothing of the sort," he snaps angrily. "But, by heavens! I'm going to get the truth from you if I have to sit here all day to get it. I want to know what took place in that cell — what was said and what was done — before you killed him. Now, who started the row?"

"He did," I promptly answer.

"How?"

I do not find a ready answer to this query; but finally explain that he called me names.

"What names?"



The persistence of this bald-headed young man annoys me, and I answer irritably that I don't remember.

"Yes you do."

I insist that I do not.

"Don't tell me you don't, because I know better." He shakes his finger in my face as he says this, and I feel the hot blood rush to my face in anger.

"I tell ye I don't remembeh."

"And I tell you again that I insist upon knowing just what your cellmate said, and what you replied."

"He called me a —" here I add divers opprobrious epithets, calculated to goad an innocent and peaceable citizen beyond endurance, and to lead to a personal encounter between the peaceable citizen and his vile defamer.

"And what did you answer?"

My reply sets forth that I at first maintained a dignified silence, notwithstanding this unprovoked attack upon my fair name; but that repetitions of the opprobrious epithets, accompanied by certain expletives (which I repeat with unction, gusto, and unwonted felicity of expression) designed to offend the chaste ear of youth, led me to address to my defamer certain epithets of a picturesque rather than a poetic character which (notwithstanding their rhetorical effectiveness) resulted in a violent and unprovoked assault upon my person, in witness whereof I produce my maimed hand as an exhibit on behalf of the peaceable but assaulted citizen, Samuel Gordin, whose rights have been ruthlessly invaded by Number 587, late deceased.

I conclude my recital of the interchange of courtesies between my former cellmate and myself with a sigh of relief as I settle back in my chair and hold up my bandaged hand in corroboration of my story of the assault, and realize that the sharp-eyed young district attorney is accepting

the story without question, and that the worst part of my ordeal is over.

"Take off those bandages, and let me see your hand."

I remove the bandages and exhibit the red, inflamed flesh of my battered hand.

"Looks pretty bad," comments Mr. Fox, after a critical examination. "Hurt much?"

"Et hoits all de time," which is the truth.

"Those fingers are in pretty bad shape, it seems to me. Sure they're not broken?"

"I dunno."

"What does the doctor say?"

"Don' say nahtin'. Diden' look at et."

"Do you mean to say that Mr. Bracken hasn't had the doctor examine your hand?"

"No, sir."

"Well, he ought to. If you've got any broken bones you're liable to have crooked fingers for the rest of your life if they're not attended to. I'll tell him about it right away."

He rises, starts for the door, and has almost reached it, when he pauses, as though recollecting something which had previously escaped him, turns to me, and says casually:

"By the way, there's a question or two that I almost forgot to ask you. You say that you called each other names, and that Number 587 attacked you with a club, and smashed your fingers."

"Yes, sir."

"Where in the world did he get that club, anyhow?"

The question, although a natural one, is so wholly unexpected that I cannot find a ready reply to it. During the past twenty-four hours I had, in the quietude of my cell, reviewed the story which I purposed to tell, and had

endeavored to anticipate the questions which would be propounded to me in the course of time, and to prepare appropriate answers thereto; but, like most offenders who concoct a defence, I had failed to make due allowance for the personal equation which enters so largely into the inquiry conducted by a trained legal mind. I had overlooked the fact that questions which would be the last to suggest themselves to my mind might be the first to suggest themselves to the mind of another, and so, as the bright glasses of the tall young man turn upon me, I suddenly realize that one of the most important elements in the story of the pretended encounter with my cellmate is lacking, and that my narrative is incomplete, and that I am wholly unprepared at that moment to supply the missing elements in my story. For the question which suddenly looms up before me as though it were a tangible something rising to affright me, assumes colossal importance as it dances before my mental vision and shapes itself into the words: "*Where in the world did he get that club, anyhow?*"

Where?

What should I answer?

Should I say that he received it from a guard? Such a reply would immediately drag the guards into the case, with the result that my word would be set up against theirs, I should be discredited, my whole story would be viewed as a fabrication, and I should probably be convicted of murder. So, floundering about in a state of mental chaos, I take refuge in those three words to which the witness upon the stand ever resorts for protection when sharply cross-examined, or when lost in doubt, and reply that I don't know.

"What's that?" queries Mr. Fox sharply.

"Oh, I dunno w'ere he got de club," I answer quer-

ulously, for the district attorney's pertinacity is wearing upon my nerves, and I am growing irritable. "How should I know w're he got et? I didn' watch 'im all day."

"You were with him in the cell, weren't you?"

"Yeh, but —"

"You went out to the prison-yard to work at the same time that he went, didn't you?"

"Yeh, b—"

"And you came back at the same time?"

"I know dat, but I didn' watch 'im all de time. I wuzen' de on'y one in de cell."

"Oh, yes. I'm glad you spoke of that." He resumes his seat before me, and eyes me steadily.

"There were three others in the cell besides Number 587 and yourself?"

"Yes, sir." I am more composed now that I perceive he has abandoned his fruitless inquiry respecting the acquisition of the club.

"And those three were put in a different cell before the fight started?"

"Yes, sir."

"By whom?"

"By Fish."

"Is Fish one of the guards?"

"Yeh."

"At what time was the change made?"

"At about seven at night."

"And you had your fight with Number 587 at what time?"

"'Bout twelve or one."

"To what cell were the other fellows transferred?"

"Cell 23, Tier 13."



"Were there any prisoners in that cell at the time the transfer was made?"

"Yes, sir. T'ree."

"How do you know they were being taken to that cell?"

"Fish said so."

He stares at me so fixedly that his look disconcerts me. I shift my glance to the door in order to avoid his penetrating gaze, and change my position, for I am growing restless under this protracted examination, and fervently wish that he would conclude this senseless inquiry and would permit me to return to my cell. I have related a plausible story, and have given him no grounds for suspicion; and I cannot understand why he persists in inquiring into trivial details when I have already described the main facts with circumstantiality.

"How long had you and the other four occupied that cell together?"

"Six weeks."

"Did Fish tell you why he was transferring the other three to another cell?"

"Yeh. 'Cause dere was so many oddeh guns comin', an' de stir (prison) was crowded."

"Were the other guns coming that day?"

"He t'ought so, but dey didn' come."

"They didn't come, eh?"

His eyes are sharper than ever as he puts my answer in the form of a query and repeats it, staring at me the while so hard that I shift uneasily in my seat, and feel myself growing more irritable every moment at his persistence in pestering me with his senseless questions. Why did I permit the words "dey didn' come" to slip from my lips? Why did I unguardedly impart this information? Per-

haps he would not have inquired of me whether they arrived or did not arrive; yet now I have volunteered the information, and he has swallowed it voraciously. I glare at him angrily.

"No, dey didn' come," I repeat defiantly.

"Didn't come, eh?"

"No." I snap the word at him, for I am thoroughly roused at his manner, and cannot repress my resentment. Though he pretends to accept my story as related by me, there is something in his expression which leads me to suspect that he doubts my veracity, and the very fact that I am not telling the whole truth increases my resentment at his doubts.

"You needn't get angry," he says calmly.

"I ain' angry," I retort surlily.

"Oh, yes you are."

"No I ain't."

"You are so angry that your face is as red as a lobster."

He is playing with me now as a cat plays with a mouse, and as a lawyer plays with an angry witness. He is goading me on to that state of mind where I shall lose my mental equipoise and forget to guard my tongue. And I, flaring up at his persistence in continuing this examination, fall readily into the trap which he prepares for me.

"I ain' angry, but I don' like dis."

"Don't like what?"

"Don' like de way ye talks te me."

"Why?" in mild surprise. "What did I say?"

"Ye didn' say nahtin'," I blurt out hotly; "but ye act as dough ye didn' b'lieve me."

"Didn't believe you?" Mr. Fox repels the suggestion with scorn, and his glasses sparkle indignantly as they catch the sunlight and shake it before his eyes; and, in

the position which he assumes at that moment, there is so much light reflected by the glasses, that it is impossible for me to catch a clear look at his eyes and to read the expression therein. But somehow I suspect that he is laughing at me ironically, and I suddenly feel that I am helpless in his hands, and that he will draw the truth from me despite my efforts to mislead him. But I draw myself up in my chair, and gaze at him defiantly, and await his further examination.

“Why do you imagine that I don’t believe you? You’re speaking the truth, aren’t you?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I thought so,” and again his glasses sparkle as they shake the light which obscures his eyes.

“Now let me see,” he says ruminatingly, after a short pause. “Let me see whether I have your story straight. You and Number 587 had some little misunderstanding, and called each other names, but you have no distinct recollection of what you said, or what he said —”

“Yes, sir.”

“— Forty-eight hours ago.”

“I tole ye wot he said an’ wot I said,” I protest querulously.

“Yes, but it took you a long, long time to remember just what you did say.— But before you had your quarrel this man Fish comes to your cell, and, as the prison is overcrowded, he relieves the congestion by putting three of your cellmates in a cell which already contains three prisoners. He does this in order to make room for some other prisoners who are expected, but who forget to come. Then, when you and Number 587 are left alone in your cell, your companion attacks you with a club which you never saw before, although you had been with him all day, and there was no place in the cell where the weapon could

have been concealed without your knowledge. Very interesting, Smith-Gordin, or whatever your name is — very interesting.”

I do not trust myself to speak. I do not dare to make any comment upon his utterance. I feel so weak, and helpless, and miserable, that I cannot summon sufficient courage to even attempt to refute the incontrovertible logic of my inquisitor's deductions. So I remain silent, though I feel that I am enmeshed in the strands which my lies have woven about me.

When the district attorney speaks again, I grasp the seat of my chair to steady myself, and prepare for the next onslaught of my keen antagonist.

“Did Fish ever have any quarrel with 587?”

“No.”

“Never?”

I ask myself whether any one has informed him of the ill-feeling which the Tanner and Fish had harboured toward each other, and whether I should deny that such ill-feeling existed, or admit it, or plead ignorance. I decide that ignorance is safer than knowledge in this instance, and accordingly answer: “I dunno.”

“Don't know?”

“No.”

“After having been a cellmate of his for six weeks you surely do know. Now answer my question, and answer it straight: Did Fish ever have any quarrel with 587?”

He shakes his finger at me in a most disconcerting manner as he puts the question, and, at the same time, changes his position so that the light no longer obscures his eyes. They gaze at me sharply and penetratingly, and my own fall before the keen look in their depths.

“Not much,” I falter.

“When did they quarrel?”



“A little w’ile ago; but it wasen’ nahtin’ wort’ talkin’ about.”

“What was it about?”

“Oh,” I murmur with affected nonchalance, “et wasen’ much. De Tanneh wanted Fish te mail a letteh, an’ he woulden’ do et.”

“When was that?”

“’Bout six weeks ago.”

“And they’ve been bad friends ever since?”

“Not jes’ bad frien’s, an’ not ’xac’ly good friends, needeh.”

“Did they have any quarrel within the last few days?”

“N-no.”

“Why do you hesitate in answering?”

“I didn’—”

“Yes you did.”

His voice has grown sterner and more peremptory; and, as I sit there, ill at ease and unnerved, I become aware of the fact that my brow is covered with perspiration, though the room is chilly. I take out my handkerchief, and mop my forehead; but he gives me no time to recover my self-possession, and continues with his questioning.

“When did they last quarrel?”

“Dey didn’—”

“When — did — they — last — quarrel?” he repeats, emphasising each word, and taking no apparent notice of my perturbation.

“Day befo’ yesterday.” The words come from me ere I have fully realised their import. With an overpowering sense of impotence I realize, when too late, that I am at his mercy.

I see him, as in a dream, rise to his feet; see him spring toward me; feel the grasp of his hands upon my shoulders as he shakes me; and see his face thrust close to mine as he

gazes into my eyes and cries excitedly: "*Then they quarrelled just before the murder!*"

Still feeling as though I were in a dream, I nod my head feebly, and surrender myself to my fate.

"And did Fish give you the club with which you killed 537?"

I shake my head, dazed and helpless.

"Don't lie to me," he hisses, gritting his teeth, and thrusting his face so close to mine that I feel his breath upon my cheeks. "Did Fish give you that club and tell you to kill him?"

Again I feebly shake my head.

"Don't lie to me; I want the truth—the truth! Wake up!" he cries, tightening his hold upon my shoulders and shaking me; "wake up, damn it! and answer me. Who gave you that club?"

"Nobody."

"You lie!" he shouts. "You're lying to me."

"I ain't."

"You murdered him with Fish's club."

"I didn' moideh him."

"Who did?"

"Fish."

"What!"

"Fish did et." And, at the words, my body collapses, and I sink together in my chair, shaking like grass in the wind, and sobbing violently.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONTINUING MY INTERVIEW WITH THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

“The truth!” cries the district attorney once more. “I want the truth! You’re trying to sneak out of it. You’re trying to put the blame on others. You’re —”

“Fish did et. He had a grudge against de Tanneh, an’ he killed ’im wit’ de club — he an’ he oddeh screws.” And then I sob forth the whole story and, having concluded, add miserably: “An’ no one’ll b’lieve me, as Mr. Bracken said — an’ now ye kin hang me fer all I care.”

He paces the room for several moments in silence, his brow knit, his head bent in thought, his eyes staring vacantly at the floor. Finally he halts, and seats himself in the chair, and says quietly: “I’ve been suspecting this for half an hour, but I couldn’t connect the threads. Now I understand it — but not all — not all.”

He pauses, and fixes me with his keen eyes.

“Why did you confess at first if you were innocent?”

“Mr. Bracken told me.”

“Mr. Bracken?”

“Yes. He said dey wouldn’t b’lieve my woid against de screws ’f I peached on ’im; an’ de screws’d put de blame on me, an’ dey’d hang me.”

“And how were you to be benefited by pleading guilty?”

“I t’ought ’f I’d show me hand, an’ say de Tanneh slugged me, an’ I clubbed ’im in self-defence, de jury’d let me off.”

“Did Mr. Bracken suggest that to you?”

“ Yeh.”

“ What else did he say? ”

“ Nahtin’.”

I ask myself whether I am acting wisely or foolishly in informing upon the warden, but I have surrendered myself so unqualifiedly to my persistent inquisitor, that I have neither the strength nor the inclination to shield any man, even though it were to my advantage so to do.

“ Didn’t he say anything else? ”

“ He sed he’d stand by me if I didn’ peach on de screws.”

“ Ah! ” Mr. Fox laughs softly to himself, and gazes intently at the ceiling for some time ere resuming the conversation; then, turning to me, he says quietly:

“ I won’t say that I believe you, Gordin, and I won’t say that I don’t believe you. If you’ve told me the truth you’ve done a wise thing and won’t lose anything by it; and if you’ve lied to me you’ve done the worst thing that you could possibly do: and whether you’ve spoken the truth or have lied to me I’m going to find out before I leave this office to-day. In the meantime it may be well for you to keep your mouth closed until I give you permission to talk. Understand? ”

I nod my head, and then gaze toward the door, for I hear footsteps approaching, and dread the return of the warden. And, sure enough, it is the warden who opens the door and gazes sharply at me, and then at my companion, as though fearful of any disclosures which may have been made in his absence. But the district attorney’s manner is reassuring, and his voice is very calm, and its tones are quite measured, and wholly devoid of emotion, as he says casually:

“ Smith has confessed the whole thing, Mr. Bracken. He has repeated the story which he told you, and admits



that he killed the man, though he claims that he did it in self-defence. If you will allow me, I'll telephone to my office and send for my clerk to write out the confession."

"Why, certainly." The warden's face clears, and he directs a wink and a nod of approbation and encouragement to me as the district attorney approaches the telephone and calls up the clerk. And when Mr. Fox, after having instructed his clerk to jump into a carriage and hurry to the prison, rejoins us, and seats himself in his chair, the warden produces a box of cigars and offers one to Mr. Fox and another to me.

"Ah! By the way," drawls the young man with the keen eyes, as he lights his cigar leisurely, "as my clerk is coming here and it may be advisable to get some corroboration of this young man's story for use at the trial, I think I'll trouble you, Mr. Bracken, to send for a few of the prisoners while I'm here. Bring me the men who occupied the adjoining cell. And also bring me the three men who were transferred from Smith's cell to another. And, Mr. Bracken"—for the warden is about to leave—"while you are about it, please inform one of the guards that I wish to speak to him. I refer to the guard who had charge of the tier of cells including the one in which 587 was confined. His name, I believe, is Fish."

## CHAPTER IX

### WHEREIN I FIND MYSELF DETAINED AS A WITNESS BUT ESCAPE

Although Mr. Bracken's face is paler than usual when he leaves us, it has grown quite white by the time that he again joins us to announce that all the witnesses whom the district attorney desired to question are without, except one.

"Which one?" queries Mr. Fox sharply.

"We can't find Fish," falters the warden, stroking his white beard nervously.

"What!"

Mr. Fox is on his feet, his tall body erect, his eyes blazing.

"He may have gone out to get something. He may be back in a few minutes," murmurs the warden.

"If he isn't, I shall know where to lay the blame, Bracken," rejoins Mr. Fox with a touch of menace in his voice. "Send for Sabel."

"He — he — went out, too."

Again that blaze in the eyes behind the glasses, while the scowl upon the young man's face grows more pronounced.

"And Johnson?"

"The — the — three of them left together."

"Damn it, Bracken!" thunders the district attorney: "what does this mean?"

"They went out and — and — didn't say where —"

"Didn't say where? Didn't say where?" shouts Mr. Fox, giving his chair a vicious kick, and striding to the

centre of the room, where he stands scowling at the warden, and shaking his fist at the latter. "You're in league with them, Bracken, and I'll have you indicted as sure as my name's Ike Fox."

The next moment he is at the telephone, calling up the detective bureau, and notifying the chief to hunt for and pursue the three men, and not to delay the quest a moment. Putting down the receiver, he turns to the trembling warden, and commands him to bring in the prisoners; and in they come, self-possessed and nonchalant, prepared to tell the story which they have been directed to relate, and to curry favor with their master, the warden, by following the instructions imparted to them.

The prisoners from the cell which adjoins my own relate how they were awakened from slumber by the sound of loud words in my cell, and how they distinguished the Tanner's voice and my own raised in hot anger, and how they heard my cry of pain as my cellmate attacked me, and the sound of the blows struck by me in self-defence.

They tell their stories so glibly, and corroborate each other so fully, and the district attorney listens so intently, that I begin to wonder whether, after all, he is not beginning to credit their stories: and I am confirmed in my fears when I perceive that he listens to the four inmates of the adjoining cell and permits each to tell his story uninterruptedly until all four have finished their respective recitals.

But then he proceeds to cross-examine them. He begins with the first one, firing questions at the latter so rapidly that the man does not have an opportunity to invent answers which shall be consistent; and before ten minutes have passed the convict's story is full of holes, and is so threadbare and shredded that it no longer hangs together, and in another ten minutes the man is flounder-

ing about, unable to gather the strands of his romance together, and five minutes later he admits that he has lied, and reluctantly relates the truth. Then the others, with all their easy assurance gone, grow eagerly veracious, and proceed to recount what they saw and what they heard from their cell, and corroborate my story in all its essential details.

Soon comes the district attorney's clerk, who proceeds to take down the various recitals in shorthand, not forgetting my former cellmates, who describe the ill-feeling existing between the Tanner and the guard; and finally, after the other prisoners have been returned to their cells, I am urged to once more relate my story in the presence of the clerk, which I proceed to do, after which I am led back to my cell.

The story of the murder is duly chronicled in the press, and, though I see no paper containing an account of the occurrence, I am informed by some of the guards that the newspapers are devoting much space to the story, and that the warden is being severely criticised for the lax discipline which was responsible for the attack upon an inmate.

I am, however, more deeply interested in the expiration of my term of imprisonment than in any other subject, and am daily counting the days which must elapse before I shall once again be free. And finally the day dawns, sunny and cheerful; and, as the sun enters my cell, it warms up my heart, and fills me with emotions of joy and thankfulness, and, as I glance round the cell which I am about to leave, I feel like one reborn — so full of happiness am I at the prospect of once more being free to go whithersoever I would.

I hear the guard approaching with my breakfast, and am overjoyed at the thought that this is the last meal which I shall eat in this accursed place. I greet him with



a smile as he opens the cell-door and hands me my unappetizing coffee and rice, and I remark that it's a nice day, and he declares that it is indeed.

His name is Sherman, and he is a much pleasanter personage than was his predecessor. Fish and his companions have not yet been apprehended, despite the vigilance of the police. The detectives, it appears have been for many days upon the trail of the three fugitives, but have not as yet located them; and I suspect that if the officers of the law would some day get off the trail they might find the men whom they seek. But at present the detectives are so busily engaged in following the trail that there is no time left them for following the fugitives.

"Well," I say smilingly, as I take my cup of coffee from the guard, "dis is me las' day here, Sherman."

"In this cell, yes."

His remark is so peculiar that I stare at him and repeat: "In dis cell? Wot d'ye mean?"

"Well, you know you're a witness in this case; and you'll have to stay in the witness-room until they're through with you at the trial."

I put down my cup of coffee, and stare at him, dazed and bewildered.

"Stay — in — de witness-room?" I gasp, feeling the joy of living slipping from me of a sudden, leaving me cold and numb.

"Why, yes. They'll need you at the trial if Fish and the others should ever be caught."

"But — me time's up," I protest in bitter disappointment, "and dey ain' got no right te keep a guy afte' his time's up."

The guard laughs softly at my ignorance.

"Of course they can hold you as a witness. You don't suppose they'll let a hobo scoot off when they need him at

a trial. Lordy, how are they ever going to find a 'bo after he's boarded a car and is bound across the continent, I'd like to know? Might as well hunt for a needle in a haystack."

But the truth of his remarks does not console me, nor does their justice appeal to me.

I have chosen to live my life in my own way. I have not merited any punishment. But I have been punished because I was a vagrant, and for this offence I have been imprisoned. I have violated the law because I chose to loaf rather than to work; and, if I have done wrong, I have expiated my offence, and have endured much suffering.

The judge decided that I should be imprisoned for sixty days, and the magistrate, in rendering his decision, was the representative of Law. Hence the Law had declared that I should be a prisoner for sixty days, and, upon the expiration of my term, should again become a free man.

Now my term is up. The prison gates should be open. But they remain closed.

Why?

Because I have been the innocent witness to the commission of a crime, and I am to be punished not for participating in it, but because I was so unfortunate as to witness it.

If I were to lock up a man in a room and deprive him of his freedom for several weeks or months I should be guilty of a crime. But the state may, under colour of the law, imprison a man who is charged with no offence, and keep him in prison as a witness, and he is expected to grin and bear it.

Thus my brain questions my jailer — not consecutively and coherently as above set forth, but wildly and hotly,

with fugitive thoughts chasing themselves through my mind in chaotic confusion.

“How much longeh mus’ I stay in de stir?” I murmur hoarsely, for my throat is very dry, and my lips feel parched, and the coffee before me does not tempt me to eat or drink.

“Nobody knows. There’s no telling when the cops’ll pinch those fellows, or when the trial will be. Maybe two months, maybe six months.”

I find that I cannot eat; and when the guard informs me that he is to take me to the witness-room, where I am to remain hereafter, I follow him without a word, too bitterly disappointed to give utterance to grief.

Soon I find myself in a room whose windows face a patch of ground in which Mrs. Bracken (for the warden’s wife lives in the prison) has planted vegetables and flowers. They are merely dry, crackling stalks now (for the winter is not yet past) but the sky is above them, and the light shines into the room, and through the barred windows one can see what the world looks like — the little bit of world which lies squeezed in between the walls that skirt the prison grounds.

Oh, but the walls are high! They stare down at me when I walk in the prison yard. They peer at me when I gaze out of the barred window. Wherever I go, at every turn, I find them grimly waiting — silent, motionless, patient but terrible — interposing their huge, bulky forms between me and liberty.

I gaze out of the window, and then turn and gaze round the room; and, as I do so, I grow less depressed, for the room is big and comparatively cheerful, and the sun lingers long upon the floor.

There is another detention room for witnesses, adjoin-



ing the one to which I have been assigned. The door was open as I passed it; and I caught sight of fully a dozen men within, sitting in the chairs, or on the beds, or lounging about the room. There are eight beds in the room where I stand disconsolately, but I am the only inmate; and I am glad to be alone and to brood in silence over my ill-fortune.

The door opens, and Red Bill enters. The guard stands a moment in the doorway, then closes and locks the door, and leaves us alone.

"Dis is a hell of a raw deal," growls my companion in his loud, raucous voice; and then he adds fervently: "Te hell wit' dis stir! Te hell wit' Fish! Te hell with Bracken! Te hell wit' all o' dem!"

His face is so red, and he is so choked with indignation, that his outburst ends in a sputter, accompanied by the expectoration of a huge quid of tobacco which he had somehow obtained.

"Wot's de matteh?" I inquire, feeling somewhat comforted by this outburst of feeling.

"Witness," he snorts in disgust.

"Me too," I murmur dolefully.

"Shake!"

His face clears as he grasps my hand and shakes it warmly. The indignation dies out of his eyes, and the frown flees from his brow, and his lips waver for a moment, and then expand into a smile. "Shake!" he repeats heartily, "I fo'got dat we wuz in de same boat. Well, den et ain' so bad afteh all. Two boids in de same cage ain' so lonesome like bein' all alone. So sit down an' let's make b'lieve we's havin' a hell of a fine time. Ha! ha! ha!"

Thus Red Bill, adjusting himself to his surroundings, and greeting ill-fortune with a punch in the ribs which



leaves him master of the situation. No wailing, or brooding, or moaning; but a merry smile, and a light heart, and ill-fortune is conquered in a jiffy.

Our striped suits are taken from us the same day, and we are arrayed in the clothes we wore when we entered the prison. We grumble at the change, for our garments are neither as warm nor as serviceable as are the prison clothes; but there is compensation in the thought that we are allowed a certain freedom from restraint, and need no longer labour with the prison gang.

Thus a month passes. Fish and his two accomplices have been indicted for murder, but are still at large. Bracken has been criticised and severely reprimanded by the Board of Freeholders for the lax discipline in the institution, but is still warden. How much longer Red Bill and I are to be kept prisoners nobody knows. We growl, and grumble, but receive no satisfactory response to our complaints. And spring is here, and the balmy air and sunlit skies invite us to the free life of the open.

"Let's ask te get out wit' de guards now an' den, an' maybe we kin make a get-a-way," suggests Red Bill. So we protest to our guard, day after day, that we ought not to be cooped up constantly, that we ought to be permitted to walk the streets occasionally; and our complaints are duly transmitted to the warden, who, finding that, after all, we have not been instrumental in causing him to lose his position, is disposed to deal leniently with us.

Accordingly, we are granted permission to walk abroad every Monday from two to four o'clock in the afternoon, accompanied by a guard named Winnow. We keep our eyes open for an opportunity to evade his vigilance, but for several weeks none presents itself. Then, one day, the guard discovers that he must make some purchases in a large dry-goods store in the centre of the town; and we

enter the store with him, and stand beside him, while he buys some socks and shirts.

The store is crowded on this day, for a special sale has been extensively advertised, and the ladies have availed themselves in large numbers of the opportunity to make purchases at reduced prices.

The saleswoman hands Winnow a check, and requests him to make his payment at a desk half way down the length of the store. We prepare to follow him, but find ourselves wedged in by the throng. An elegantly gowned woman in black says sharply: "Don't be so rude, sir!" when Red Bill jostles her.

"'Scuse me," he murmurs apologetically, and then whispers in my ear: "Now fer a get-a-way."

The magic words rouse me. In a moment I am on the alert. While Winnow is slowly proceeding toward the desk in the blissful belief that we are following him, Red Bill and I are elbowing our way through the crowd of women, and hurrying toward the entrance. Another minute and we are outside.

"Now pick up yer feet an' beat et," murmurs Bill hoarsely. "Scoot fer de station!"

We fly along the streets, first turning a corner to escape the eye of the guard upon his exit from the store, then running for a block in an opposite direction from that in which the railway station lies, in order to mislead him when he starts in pursuit, then again turning a corner, and now heading straight for the station.

"Go easy now if ye wan's te beat de road," I pant. "If dey sees us runnin' dey'll be on te us an' cop us befo' we kin get de trucks."

"Te hell wit' trucks!" he answers. "Who wan's te beat de road?"

I am so spent with running that I am not in a condition

to discuss the subject with him; but, as I know that neither of us has a cent in his pockets, I am incapable of understanding how we can escape from the town unless we steal a ride.

In the distance I hear the whistle of an approaching train.

"Slow up!" I shout angrily. "D'ye wan' te make a holy show o' yerself an' git yanked off de cars befo' ye gits settled dere? Dey'll see us, sure. Dere's de station mas-teh now, an' he'll —"

"Shet up!" replies Red Bill, and continues to race toward the station, while I follow in disgust, half disposed to leave him to bear the consequences of his folly alone.

And while I follow, cursing his stupidity, I see him enter the waiting room, approach the ticket office, and purchase two tickets with a small roll of bills which he draws from his pocket.

I stare at him in bewilderment, dumbfounded at this unexpected display of funds, unable to comprehend how he acquired the money, how it found its way into pockets which, I am confident, were empty when we left the prison yard an hour ago.

As we sit in the smoking car, two minutes later, puffing at cigarettes purchased with his money, and watch the station moving slowly past the window at which we are seated, he says confidentially:

"Ye see, we couldn' take no chances beatin' de road dis trip. Too dangerous w'en de cops is afte' yez. Et wuz necessary te git te de foist station outside o' de state wit'out runnin' any chances. So I had te pay de dough. Et wuz de on'y t'ing te do unde' de soicumstances."

"But w'ere did ye git de boodle?" I query in perplexity.

He smiles, and chuckles, and winks, and puffs at his cigarette until his laughing face is quite hidden by the

smoke. Then, from behind the cloud which obscures his face, I hear his chuckling voice making reply:

“Dere wuz so many ladies at de bahgain counteh — an’ I knew dey could spare a few plunks fer a couple o’ pore blokes — but I hated te ask.” Another puff at his cigarette, and another chuckle of amusement. “An’ dere wuz a lady in a black dress as looked putty swell; an’ w’en I bumped against her she sez, sez she, ‘Don’ be so rude, sir’ — awful perlite like — so I wuzen’ rude. I lifted her leddeh wit’out distoibin’ her at all. Lifted et jes’ as easy as fallin’ off a log. Wasen’ rude at all. Coulden’ be rude w’en she wuz so perlite, ye know.”

Here his face emerges from the smoke long enough to disclose such a droll and mischievous expression that I laugh aloud.

“Well, you’re a corker!” I exclaim in admiration, as I settle back in my seat and, for the first time in my life, enjoy the rare pleasure of riding in a luxuriously appointed car, with no dread of ejection by brakeman and conductor.



## BOOK V

### GROPING FOR LIGHT



## CHAPTER I

### IN A BOWERY MUSIC HALL

Back in New York! New York in the eighties.

New York the restless, the gay, the wretched. New York with its hurrying throngs, its laughter, its misery. New York, where lower Broadway hums like a beehive all day, and closes its stores and offices at night so that darkness and silence may hold sway until the morning light rouses it into turbulent activity again: where upper Broadway hums like a smaller beehive all day, and at night opens its eyes so wide that they glitter and flash with the lights from its theatres and its restaurants and cafés. For lower Broadway sleeps at night, but upper Broadway knows no sleep.

Back in New York, where all day long the docks along the river front receive their loads of merchandise from the trucks that rumble over them, and from the steamers that anchor at their feet; and all night long the river-rats and marauders slink along Front Street and West Street in the gloom, and lie in wait for drunken sailors or lone pedestrians.

New York, where Central Park laughs and beckons to the fairy mansions of Fifth Avenue across the way, and says: "I am your garden. Smile on me!"—where wealth and beauty glory in their power; where poverty and misery cower in their dens; where vice hides itself in rich and fashionable brothels, and flaunts itself in the vile dens of lower Manhattan or in that district of gaiety and pleas-

ure known as The Tenderloin — unsavoury Tenderloin, highly spiced, overdone, hot with pepper, odorous with filth, appetising to the eye, but nauseating to the taste — putrid, ill-smelling Tenderloin — costly, but vile.

New York — shouting, rushing, screaming, laughing — forever alert, and never at rest — swimming in beer, bathing in rum, and washing its face clean with champagne — working, and saving, and spending — tippling, and dancing, and roistering. A city of music and discord — of laughter and sobs, each striving to drown the other — of jubilation and triumph and groans — of gay suppers, and glorious nights of dissipation, and sudden deaths. A city where Life is ever young (though some sad hearts say contrariwise), where all is gay and joyous (though some weep unseen) and where Pleasure walks the streets in velvet finery (though some see but rags hanging from a gaunt and tottering form). And this is New York!

“Now fer de Bowery!” says Red Bill, upon our arrival; and to the Bowery we forthwith take our way.

“Let’s have a drink,” says my companion; so we halt before a saloon bearing the legend: “Bowery Music Hall,” and enter.

Music is no stranger to the Bowery. If the Bowery boy were to meet the muse of song upon the street, he’d clap her lightly upon the shoulder and invite her to take a drink. For music flourishes on the Bowery, and, like most of the growths in that delectable district, thrives upon beer and whisky; and when its votaries unite in giving vocal expression to the emotions which stir their tempestuous souls, the heavens crack as the chorus of some popular ditty assails their doors, and, while the heavens crack, the ambrosial liquid flows.

Where there is music on the Bowery there is beer; and where there is beer there are to be found the bright and



joyous Daughters of Gloom whose lives are so filled with gaiety that nothing about them is sad except their hearts.

We pass through a saloon with a bar to one side at which a dozen men are standing with beer glasses in their hands. Most of them are conversing in maudlin tones, and two of them are fighting, and one human wreck is lurching against a board partition whereon photographs of ballet dancers and of nude women are displayed.

We enter the dance hall to the rear of the saloon, and find ourselves in a room about twenty feet wide and sixty feet long. It is night; and the gas jets are lighted, disclosing three rows of circular tables, with a dozen men seated in various parts of the hall, and at the farther end a stage with a set scene representing a crudely painted garden.

We seat ourselves at a table in the company of a drunken sailor and his lass. The sailor is drowsing, and his chin is resting upon his chest; the lass is supporting him with one arm, and with the disengaged hand is playing with his watch chain.

"Hello, Sal!" says Red Bill, dropping into the chair beside her. "Don' lemme distoib ye. Et looks like foh-teen karats."

She draws her hand quickly away from the chain, and smiles.

"Hello, Bill!" Then, to the waiter who queries solicitously: "Wot'll ye has, gents?" she murmurs nonchalantly that she'll have beer.

"Don' lemme keep ye f'om makin' a haul," murmurs Bill, with a significant glance at the sailor's dangling chain.

"Well, seeing it's you —" She deftly relieves her slumbering companion of his watch and chain, and slips her spoils into the pocket of her skirt. "You always was a decent guy, Bill, and when the beer comes I'll drink to your luck," she says appreciatively.

"W'y, darn my eyes," murmurs Bill, in surprised accents, "ef your friend ain' got a sparker (diamond) in his tie! Ain' dat too bad? Ef he falls in wit' some low-down guy he'll lose et sure. I do t'ink I ought te take care of et. I do t'ink ez I ought te pertect him fer your sake, Sal, seein' ez ye're a pertic'lar friend o' his. Por slob! I'll take care o' yer sparker, I will, me deah friend. Jes' trust me wit' it. Dat's de way. T'anks."

He speaks so solicitously to his unconscious victim, and his manner is so droll, that the woman and I can scarcely repress our laughter as we see him drop the glittering scarf-pin into his pocket. I look about us, fearful lest we may have been observed; but there is no one behind us, and no attention is paid to us by those in front. But the waiter is approaching us with the beer; and there is an ominous look in his eyes as he deposits the beverage upon the table before us.

He is a low-browed individual with red, flabby cheeks, and deep-set, glittering eyes; and instead of moving away after Red Bill has paid him, he plants himself close to my companion, and grasps the latter by the shoulder with a big, brawny hand blue with tattoo marks.

"Say, cully," he says huskily, "jes' hand over dat sparker to de gent, or gimme it an' I'll take care of et—see?"

Red Bill turns, and eyes him in innocent surprise.

"Wot sparker?" he queries.

"No kiddin'—no kiddin', cully," he says, raising his upper lip so that his yellow teeth show menacingly, "fork over!" and, at the command to disgorge, he stretches out his right hand to receive the purloined article.

"Oh, say now, old man," says Bill soothingly, as he feels in his pockets; "d'ye know I putty neah fe'got te ask yez te take a drink fer yerself. My! my! how care-

less! Heah's two plunks"—handing him a two-dollar bill, "an' don' fe'git te take a drink on us."

The surly lips soften into a hideous smile; the menacing eyes grow convivial; the waiter bends down, and whispers in Red Bill's ear in subdued tones, indicative of the kindness and esteem which possess his soul: "Should I bounce de guy?"

"Sure," assents my companion heartily.

Without another word, the gentleman with the unwashed apron (for the latter is as dirty as his face) takes his stand with easy grace beside the slumbering marine, and plants his heavy hand, with a thud, upon the shoulder of the sailor.

"Hey you!" he roars, shaking the son of the sea violently. "Wot d'yez mean by distoibin' de loidy? I'll douce yer glim (close your eyes) 'f ye does dat ag'in."

The sailor opens his eyes in bewilderment, and stares about him vacantly.

"Wot!" pursues the carrier of the ambrosial liquid, affecting a towering rage: "yez don' care? Yez sez ye'll do et ag'in? I'll be damned 'f yez will! Te hell wit' yez! Out wit' de bloke!" And, at the words, he fastens his fingers firmly in the mariner's collar, pulls the dazed man from the table, pushes him out of the dance hall, through the saloon, and out of the door which is opened by the obliging proprietor, who emerges from behind the bar to assist in accelerating the exit of the plundered man.

"Ain' dat rich?" laughs Red Bill, and I smile, though somehow the plight of the sailor appeals to my sympathies, and for the first time a feeling akin to disgust takes possession of me as I witness my companion's mirth. But I smile, and conceal my disgust lest he read my thoughts. I dissemble lest I sink in the rascal's esteem. I want him to think well of me, for he is my companion now, and the



yearning for companionship is as strong within the breast of the denizens of the Underworld as it is within the bosom of his more favored fellow-men.

Red Bill presents me to the lass named Sal; and Sal forthwith insists upon ordering beer for the trio and paying for it. She is an attractive looking girl of twenty-two, or thereabouts, with innocent blue eyes, and blonde hair, and beautiful pink cheeks. I prefer the right cheek to the other one because its color is more evenly distributed. Her greatest glory, however, is her blonde hair which shimmers so wonderfully, and curls so gracefully, that it quite shames nature. And some of the wonderful hair upon her pretty head is undoubtedly her own, though its color was purchased in a Broadway drugstore.

"Well," says Bill, "how's biz?"

"Business is pretty rotten just at present. Byrnes' men keep their eyes on me too much. Sometimes I'm afraid to make a haul after everything is framed up (arranged for the commission of the crime) for fear I'll be spotted."

"Te hell wit' Byrnes' men!"

"Hell nothing! You work New York for a couple of months, and if you don't run up against Byrnes' men often enough to make you sweat, I'll eat my head."

It is not the first time that I have heard mention made of "Byrnes' men," nor is it the last time that I am to hear criminals speak of him in awe and fear. Who has not heard of Inspector Byrnes, head of the New York detective bureau in the eighties, and terror of the criminals who ply their calling in the great metropolis? Byrnes — powerful and dominant; Byrnes — sharp-eyed, strong-armed, keen for the scent as a bloodhound of the law should be; Byrnes — active, tireless, tenacious, hunting for the trail of criminals and loving the pursuit; Byrnes — chief of de-



tectives, terror of evil-doers — Thomas J. Byrnes of the New York police!

“Boynes neveh troubled me,” says Red Bill swaggeringly.

“No. And the only reason he hasn’t troubled you is because you haven’t troubled him. Just keep working New York for a little while and you’ll get all the trouble you’re looking for, and more.”

“Well,” says Red Bill, with a confident smile, “I’d jes’ ez lieve make a touch in dis burg as ennyw’ere, an’ I guess I’m fly enough fer Boynes w’en et comes to de point.”

“You’ll go below the Dead Line next, I suppose,” smiles Sal, banteringly.

“Yez bets yer life I will ef I feels like et — Boynes or no Boynes.”

“Wot Dead Line?” I interject.

“Ho, ho!” exclaims Sal incredulously. “He don’t know what the Dead Line is!”

“No. Wot is et?”

“You don’t mean to say —” And then, after staring at me for a moment in apparent surprise at my ignorance, she says: “Say! You haven’t been in New York long — have you?”

“N — no,” I stammer, indecisively. “Dat is, I wuz here fer a time, an’ den I went west, an’—”

“O — o — oh! I thought you couldn’t know New York very well if you didn’t know where the Dead Line is. Here, waiter!”

She orders soda-water, while Bill and I order beer; and then, having given her order, she says to me:

“The Dead Line? Oh, every crook knows where the Dead Line is. In New York and out of New York — all over the country — the guns know where Byrnes estab-

lished the Line. A few years ago he was appointed to reorganise the detective bureau. I was only a kid at that time, and had just started in to do crooked work, and we were having a pretty easy time of it with the thick-headed bulls they had on the force, and didn't care a darn for the whole detective force. And then Byrnes took charge, and gee whiz! but things began to hum."

She pauses a moment, and gazes before her ruminatingly. Her blue eyes are as sweet and innocent as the eyes of a child; and not all the vice which she has witnessed, nor all the crimes in which she has participated, have succeeded in extinguishing the radiance which emanated from those bright orbs. I try to picture her as she was when she "had just started in to do crooked work" (as she expressed it) when she was "only a kid," a young girl peering with clear blue eyes into the shadows of life instead of into the sunshine.

"Give me a cigarette," she says, and I hand her one.

"It was this way," she explains. "The guns used to have things their own way down Wall Street. They'd lift the leather (steal pocketbooks) so often in that section that the stockbrokers complained. But what did their complaints amount to? The whole police force was on the bum, and it was dead easy for the guns to steer clear of them. Then Byrnes took hold of things, and the first thing he did on the day he took charge was to detail nine of his best men to look after the financial district. He opened Wall Street headquarters, and drew a line through Fulton Street, and said: 'This is the Dead Line. Any crook that goes below Fulton Street will be pinched on sight.'

"It didn't take long for the guns to find out that he meant just what he said. We steer clear of the Dead Line — that's all — if we know what's good for us, and

we leave the swell guys down there alone unless we catch them in some street further uptown where it's not so hot."

"I ain't afraid o' Boynes or no Boynes," declares Red Bill, with a fine air of braggadocio, and orders a whisky,

"Were you ever mugged (photographed for the Rogues' Gallery)?" queries Sal.

"Sure."

"Then they'll spot you as sure —"

"Dey don' know me well enough fer dat. Et's five years since I wuz pinched in dis town."

Sal laughs, and her blue eyes light up with merriment, as she playfully taps his shoulder with her finger-tips.

"They'll know you, old sport. Don't fear about that. They'll know you if you was a baby the last time you were mugged. Byrnes and his men have eyes like cameras. Well, I'll have to be going."

She pushes back her chair and rises from the table.

"Have another drink," says Bill.

"No, thank you, I've drunk all the beer I want." Then, with a smile, she adds: "The next guy I meet will have to treat me to champagne or I'll lose him. Glad to have met you"—this to me. "So long."

## CHAPTER II

### WHEREIN I WATCH A GAMBLING GAME AND ESCAPE FROM A RAID

"Say, Sam, I'm putty near broke." Red Bill empties his pockets, and exhibits their contents in confirmation of his statement. "Eighty-nine cen's. Putty near busted. Don' ye t'ink et's about time we makes a haul?"

We are sitting in an untidy little bedroom on Water Street, and the morning sun is shining into our window. The bed whereon we had passed the night is covered with torn and soiled linen, the walls of the room are cracked and discoloured, the woodwork is chipped, and the floor is littered with old papers; but here it is that we have passed three nights, paying twenty-five cents each evening for our room, and now the few dollars which Red Bill brought with him to New York have dwindled down to eighty-nine cents.

"Time to make a haul." The suggestion does not fill me with enthusiasm. The "haul" to which my companion refers is the money to be acquired by picking pockets, and somehow the idea does not appeal to me. I stare out of the window instead of replying, and wonder vaguely what is to be done.

"Dere's plenty o' big touches to be made in dis 'ere town," continues Bill, stroking his red beard, which has grown considerably since our departure from prison, "an' et's mighty poor policy te let dem city guns make all de hauls w'en we might jes' as well git our share and live a easy life."



I continue to stare out of the window into the street below, and I ask myself whether, after all, the hardships of the road are not preferable to the precarious life of crime which the city offers to its outcasts; and, as I meditate, I see the waving cornfields stretching out before me, hear the whistle of the speeding engines, and the rattle of the shaking tracks, and hear the road faintly calling — calling to its recreant son.

“I don’ like et,” I murmur sullenly.

“Don’ like wot?”

“Bein’ a dip.”

“Not like et?” Red Bill’s voice is raised in indignation. “Not like et? W’y, ye hasen’ even tried et. Yez don’ know a damn bit about et. Wot t’ell d’yez wan’ te do den ef yez is so pertic’lar?”

“I dunno,” I murmur lamely. “Hit de road, I s’pose.”

“Hit de road?” Bill raises his voice in derision. “Hit de road? Who eveh made a nickel hittin’ de road? Ye kin live a t’ousan yeahs an’ ye’ll neveh be anyt’ing but a bum, an’ live like a bum, an’ die like one. W’y, Sam, et’s de guns as makes de hauls, an’ gits de dough, an’ lives like lords, an’—”

“You’re a hell of a lord,” I retort disdainfully, eying his shabby attire, and sniffing at his pretensions.

“Dat’s a nice way o’ talkin’ te a pal as has stuck by ye,” says my companion in wounded accents. “I may be down on me luck te-day, but we guns don’ stay down long, ye kin gamble on dat. Jes’ come wit’ me an’ I’ll show yez somet’in as’ll open yer eyes.”

“W’ere ye goin’?”

“Jes’ come along oveh te Ike Rosenbaum’s, an’ I’ll show yez a few guns as hev made good.”

“Who’s Ike Rosenbaum?” I query, rising from my seat and following him to the door.

"He used te be a dip, an' now he runs a hangout w're all de guns go w'en dey've made a haul. Come 'long!"

I accompany him to the gambling den of Ike Rosenbaum, and learn that it is located on Houston Street; but when we arrive at our destination I find myself in front of a restaurant whose windows bear the legend "Chops and Steaks." We enter, and find ourselves in a room containing a dozen tables with clean linen thereon, and two waiters in attendance, and a man seated in the rear of the room upon a stool, and surveying us as we enter. There are dark blue curtains extending across the lower half of the rear wall, and some pictures of fruit and game upon the wall above the curtains.

A waiter approaches us and draws back two chairs from one of the tables; but Red Bill brushes past him and whispers to the man who is seated on the stool. There is a short colloquy, in the course of which my companion points to me, and the man nods his head several times, and finally parts one of the curtains, and presses a button.

"Come on!" says Bill, and I follow him behind the curtain, and find that an iron door in the wall is sliding to one side, disclosing a long room, containing fully twenty tables, at which about fifty men are seated, playing cards.

"Dey're playin' twenty-one," whispers my guide as the door slides back in its place. "Walk around ez dough you wuz at home, an' watch de money fly."

We saunter down the room, pausing at some of the tables to watch the game. I perceive that Red Bill is acquainted with some of the gamblers, for they nod to him; but their greeting is so perfunctory that I conclude that my companion does not rank very high in the Underworld, and that he is merely one of the many thousand of criminals who somehow eke out an existence in the realms of darkness,

but lack the genius for pilfering which exalts those who attain notoriety and prestige.

"Dere's Dutch Sam," he says in a low voice, indicating a well-dressed young man of thirty or thereabouts. "He framed up de job at de West Side Bank an' carried off ten t'ousan' f'om de safe. De flatties (detectives) pinched 'im, but he wuz too sharp fer Boynes. They neveh foun' de goods on 'im an' had to let 'im go. Oveh dere"—pointing to a broad, blonde man of fifty—"is de guy as walked off wit' de weddin' presents at de Ohl's weddin'. See dat feller wit' de roun' face an' reddish-brown beard? Dat's Jimmy Hope, as robbed de Manhattan Savin' Bank o' nearly t'ree million. His son Johnny got twenty yeahs fer his share in de woik, but ole Jimmy went out West an' wuz copped fer a job dere. Now he's back ag'in. Dat guy sittin' by the window is Red Leary. See dat feller at dat table oveh dere?"

"W'ich one?"

"De one wit' de brown hair an' de chin-beard."

"Who is he?"

"Mollie Matches."

"Who's Mollie Matches?"

Red Bill laughs. "You ask de banks: dey know 'im."

"How'd he git his name?"

"W'en he wuz a kid dere wuz some racket in New York. I don't remembah wot et wuz, but de town turned out, an' dere wuz big crowds. So Mollie (his real name's John Larney) dressed up like a goil, an' sold matches te de crowd, an' had a easy time liftin' de leddeh; an' w'en dey woke up he had two t'ousan' bones in his pocket. Putty good haul fer a match-goil, eh?" And my companion laughs in appreciation of the exploit.

I gaze at the faces of the gamblers with increased inter-



est. There is something fascinating in the history of these men, desperate outlaws though they be. Stirring adventures have marked their lives; cunning, and shrewdness, and daring have distinguished their sordid achievements.

These men are leaders of the world which now revolves about me — the World of Crime from which it appears impossible for me to escape. In the prison I was thrown into intimate association with its denizens — with Green Tom, and Slippery Joe, and Red Bill, and an army of marauders anxious to teach a youthful recruit the demoralising lore of the Underworld. I have gone forth from prison, but cannot shake off its associations. At my side sits the pal whom the prison has given to me. I am shackled to crime, and strain vainly at my fetters. For crime does not attract me — as yet. But Red Bill is patient and pertinacious, and realises that if he can arouse my admiration for the leaders in the World of Crime he will soon induce me to emulate them.

There is a buzzing sound at the entrance to the room as the lookout without presses the button once as a signal to the guard within. The latter — a trim, neatly dressed young man of about twenty-eight — who has been standing at a table, watching a game, hurries to the wall and presses a button. The iron door opens to admit a bald, middle-aged individual with grey hair, and then closes again.

“Hello!” says a black-haired young man with a dark moustache, looking up from his play. “I thought you were broke.”

“So I was — an hour ago,” laughs the newcomer, drawing a roll of bills from his pocket; “but I met an easy guy on the streets, and —” with a wink — “borrowed his wad.”

The room echoes with laughter.



"See dat!" whispers Red Bill, nudging me. "He wuz broke a hour ago, an' now he made a haul. He looks like a slick dip, don't he? Look at de roll o' dough he's got." And then, with a note of admiration in his voice, he adds: "On'y a hour — jes' t'ink of et, Sam — all in a hour by jes' woikin' some slick game."

He looks at me reproachfully, and shakes his head. "Oh, Sammy, Sammy," he murmurs plaintively, "see wot ye're missin'. An' you, as could be as good a dip as any guy in de bunch! Sammy, Sammy, ye're losin' de chance o' yer life!"

I make no reply. I am not unimpressed by the sight of the money displayed so ostentatiously by the grey-haired individual — money acquired so quickly as to stagger the tyro whose initiation into the Brotherhood of the Powers That Prey has not yet been fully completed. Here is a man who leaves a gambling den without a dollar and returns an hour later with pocket bulging with wealth.

How easy it is to acquire funds in this dark, sunless Underworld! — and yet how quickly the ill-gotten wealth takes flight! For all the criminals whom I have hitherto met appear to be impecunious nine-tenths of the time.

Now, if I were to acquire money I would save it, I say to myself. I would not squander it at the gaming table, but would put it aside so that my savings may accumulate. I would spend a little for drink, visit the concert-halls for recreation, select some fair charmer for a companion, provide a home for her, and break the ten commandments for diversion. But I would not squander all my gains. I would save something so that I may in time accumulate some wealth.

Perhaps some day I should marry.

Whom?

Yes, whom?

Some drab from the streets, perhaps; some woman from the gutter: and this would be my life-companion.

"Wot's de matteh?" queries Red Bill.

I start, and meet his curious glance fixed upon me; and feel the red blood rushing to my face.

"W'y?"

"Ye looks as dough ye wuz at a fune'al."

I smile with an effort, and tell him that I have a headache.

He receives my explanation with suspicion, and mutters that I'm the queerest kid he ever met, and he'd like to know what the hell's the matter with me anyhow.

"Shut up!" I gruffly retort.

"Wot de hell —!"

"Shut up!" I repeat hotly. "I got a headache — damn et!"

What has made me so irritable? A vision — a vision that has flitted across my mind's eye for just a moment. The vision of some fresh-faced, pure-eyed girl with rosy cheeks and tender eyes, trusting and guileless. The Girl That I Shall Never Know — one living in some other world from which I am shut out, where thieves and tramps and desperadoes never enter, and where men and women live clean lives. She will never meet me; or, meeting me, will never deem me worthy to touch her unsoiled hands.

For me the painted woman of the streets — the woman with the knowing eyes and the cold, hard face, and the heart whose innocence is strangled.

I am but a boy, and, notwithstanding my sordid life, the boy within my heart yearns for love. I am at that age when dreams — sentimental dreams — disturb one's peace. In the silence of the night I sometimes picture to myself the sort of girl that I should like to meet, and to love, and to marry — and she belongs neither to Hoboland

nor to the World of Crime, whereas I belong to both. And I conjure up a vision of The Girl That I Shall Never Know; and, after a time, the vision fades away, and I am left to my bitter thoughts, and lie awake for an hour upon the hard mattress, while Red Bill snores at my side.

And the ending is always the same. I feel that I am a fool. I realise that I am plunged in a turbulent stream from which there is no escape. I cannot escape: I must drift with the current. I resign myself to the inevitable, knowing that I am foredoomed to a life of crime.

Why hesitate? Why struggle against fate? — Why?

I do not know. And yet I hesitate, not knowing why, and fight against fate, though knowing that the fight is vain.

There is a buzzing signal at the door. The trim young man who guards the entrance is about to press the button which opens the iron door, when he suddenly pauses. Again the buzzer sounds.

The gamblers raise their heads and listen. The room grows silent. All voices are hushed.

For the third time the buzzer sounds.

“Cheese it!” shouts the guard, warningly. “A raid!”

In a moment all is confusion. Chairs are flung back. Cards are thrown upon the tables and to the floor. Everybody springs to his feet. The room is in an uproar.

“The cellar!” whispers Red Bill in my ears.

A trap door has been raised in the centre of the room by some one, and all rush toward it — I with the rest. In another moment I find myself in a struggling crowd at the head of a pair of steps leading down to a dark cellar. I follow the men ahead of me, and descend the steps hurriedly. Then come others after me.

I hear above my head the sound of a heavy implement pounding something that gives forth a metallic sound.



The officers of the raiding party are attacking the iron door. Another moment, and the trap door is closed upon us. We are in total darkness.

"This way!" shouts a voice.

We grope our way through the gloom, and find that a door which yields readily connects the cellar to which we have descended with the cellar of the adjoining house. Here there is sufficient light to enable us to perceive a rickety stairway leading upward. We ascend the stairs, and find ourselves in the hallway of the house adjoining the gambling establishment.

The door leading to the street is fortunately closed. We dare not emerge from the front entrance lest we fall into the arms of the officers of the law who are waiting upon the sidewalk. It is evident that a crowd has congregated upon the street to watch the raid, for the murmurs and shouts of the throng are borne distinctly to our ears.

Out of the hallway into the backyard; and now we perceive that some of the tenants of the upper floors are leaning out of the windows and greeting us with derisive shouts.

"Look at the old plugs," cries a fat woman with unkempt hair, whose laughing face protrudes from a third story window.

"Oh, Mrs. Harris, dey look like dey got a scare sure 'nough," shouts a frowsy haired female with a hooked nose.

A red-headed boy throws down a potato which damages the head of Dutch Sam and causes the latter to swear volubly, to the intense amusement of the spectators on the heights.

"Oh, gee!" screams the red-headed youth in delight. "Ain' dey a pretty bunch!" Derisive laughter greets the sally, whereat the youth is emboldened to present Dutch Sam with another potato which, missing its mark, lands



upon the neck of a fat, red-faced man, who forthwith gives vent to his wrath in language forceful and picturesque.

We still hear the metallic sound of the hammers of the raiding party battering the iron door; but the noise is muffled, and comes to our ears indistinctly. The door has not yet given way.

There is a wooden fence to the rear of the yard, and some of the men break this down so that we may clamber through the breach. We are now in the yard of a tenement fronting upon Prince Street. Into the dark hallway of the building we hurry, and out of the front door to the street, and there we disperse.

"Putty near pinched," I say, as I rejoin Red Bill.

"Hell!" ejaculates my companion. "Dey couldn' 'a' done us nothin'. We wuzen' doin' nothin'. Dey wuz on'y bluffin'."

But, nevertheless, I sigh with relief as I walk the sunlit streets.

## CHAPTER III

### WHEREIN I DECIDE TO REFORM

“Wuz yez eveh in Wall Street?” queries Red Bill.

It is afternoon, and we have just emerged from a saloon where we have partaken of beer and two sandwiches for five cents, the sandwiches being gratis and worth the price.

“No,” I answer, with a sniff. “D’ye take me fer a millionaire?”

Red Bill chuckles, and pushes back his hat until a fringe of fiery hair peers from beneath the brim.

“Millionaire? ’Course ye’re a millionaire. We dips is all millionaires. Dey gambles in stocks an’ we gambles in cards. Dey goes to de Stock Exchange an’ we goes to Rosenbaum’s. We takes our chances, win o’ lose, jes’ like dem. W’ere’s de diff’ence, I like to know?” Then, with an air of profound wisdom, he concludes: “We’s all millionaires.”

I smile derisively. I have heard such talk before. I am reminded of a panegyric of the hobo delivered by Blinkey Sam some years ago as we trudged along a country road. I was younger when Sam sought to impress upon me the nobility of idleness — younger and more susceptible to blandishments than I am to-day — for now I remain unimpressed, and only smile sceptically at my companion’s outburst.

He looks at me laughingly, and tells me not to worry — we’ll be rich men one of these days, or his name’s not Red Bill.

“Jes’ foller yer ole pal, Sam, an’ ye’ll be staked fer life

befaw ye're grey. Dere's a lot o' easy money in de woild jes' waitin' fer de likes o' you an' me, an' if we keeps our eyes open an' gits on de job befaw de odder smart ducks git busy, dere's no reason w'y we shoulde'n make a few hauls as'll put us on Easy Street fer de rest o' our lives."

"Wot d'ye wan' te do in Wall Street?" I query, as we walk down Park Row.

"I wan's te show yez de Stock Exchange an'—"

"Wot t'ell do I want wit' de Stock Exchange? It's de free counter dat I'm interested in."

"An' Maiden Lane — I'll show yez Maiden Lane, w'ere all de jewelry stores is, an' w'ere yez kin see di'mon's as big ez eggs."

I stop short, and eye my companion suspiciously.

"Wot t'ell's your game, anyhow?" I ask him bluntly.

He affects a laugh, and takes me by the arm, drawing me along with him.

"Et's all right, Sam," he says lightly. "Ye needen' do nothin' ye don' wan' te. All I wan's te do now is te show yez de sights o' Noo York."

We approach the entrance to the Brooklyn Bridge, dingy and unimpressive, giving no hint of the wonder beyond; and, glancing across the street, I behold the City Hall, dust-begrimed but beautiful, with its front of marble and its back of red sandstone — those rear walls which "would be out of sight to all the world," as a writer declared at the time of its erection.

We pass down Newspaper Row, where the newsboys are skipping about amid the hurrying throngs, and shouting: "Extra! Extra! Full account o' de murder!" but who was murdered or where he was murdered concerns me so little, and concerns the throng so little, that no one pays any attention to the purveyors of the news.

"Extra! Extra! Full account o' de murder!" And

what is one life more or one life less to the throngs intent upon the struggle for existence, or to Red Bill, anxious to behold the diamonds big as eggs, or to me who am wondering where I shall get my meals when our last cent shall have been spent?

Into Broadway we turn, and find ourselves in the human tide which flows along the street. Everybody is in haste. Brokers fight their way through the throngs in haste to reach the exchange. Lawyers hurry to and from their offices as though the fate of the nation depended upon their haste. Business men jostle their fellow pedestrians and rush along with feverish anxiety. Haste — haste — haste. No deliberation, no restful saunter — a mad haste as though the world were coming to an end and a thousand details of business to be attended to before the final tragedy. Restless minds, and nervous faces, and bodies in constant motion; and Haste! Haste! Haste! is signalled from brain to brain. And this is Broadway on a mild, cheery, sunny day, with the heavens looking down, calm and unperturbed, as though marvelling at the folly of mortals.

We have passed Fulton Street, and John Street, and are approaching Maiden Lane, when our progress is suddenly interrupted by a stout, middle-aged man, neatly dressed in brown — a man with grey eyes and heavy, brown moustache, who has been standing in front of a cigar store, and who, at sight of Red Bill, plants himself directly in our path, and says casually to my companion: "Better turn back. You're down too far."

His voice is low — so low that probably none of the pedestrians about us catches the few words he has uttered. I stare at him in surprise; and Bill, supposing that the man has evidently mistaken him for some other individual, is about to brush past him, when the stranger's hand



grasps him firmly by the shoulder, and the man's voice says (this time louder and more firmly than before): "Turn back, I say. You're down too far, Red Bill."

"Wot de — ?"

"I know your mug: you're number 486," says the Man in Brown quietly. "I'll let you go this time; but if I ever catch you below the Dead Line again, I'll pinch you so quick that you won't know what struck you. Now beat it (hurry away)!"

Red Bill's face turns redder than usual. He stares a moment at the calm face of the Man in Brown, then drops his eyes sheepishly, and turns round to retrace his steps, while I prepare to follow him. But the Man in Brown is evidently not content to have us depart so abruptly, notwithstanding his injunction to "beat it," for he takes us aside, out of the hurrying throngs whose way we have blocked, to the shade of the awning in front of the cigar store.

"Who's your pal?" he says, indicating me.

"His name's —" begins Bill.

"Smith," I say boldly — "Sam Smith." Again I have yielded to the impulse to hide my identity from possible disgrace — yielded instinctively, without a moment's deliberation, in the presence of this mysterious stranger who inspires my companion with awe.

"Oh, Smith, is it?" drawls the Man in Brown, with just the shadow of a sceptical smile upon his face. "I think I've heard that name before. Let's have a look at you, Smith, so that I may know you when I meet you again. I know so many Smiths and Browns that I'm afraid I might get confused unless I have a good look at you."

He gazes at me so penetratingly, and studies my features so searchingly, that I feel my cheeks grow hot beneath his glance. He examines me for but a moment; yet in that

moment I feel outraged, disgraced, as a man might be who, innocent of crime, is nevertheless photographed for the Rogues' Gallery.

"I'll know you if I see you again, I guess," he says curtly. "Now beat it — both of you — and don't let me catch you down this way again."

We shamle off, cowed and discomfited, and do not utter a word until, reaching Fulton Street, I glance back and find that we are not followed.

"Wot wuz dat number he gave ye?"

"One o' Boynes' men — damn 'im. I neveh seen 'im befaw, an' he neveh seen me needer; but 'e must 'a' seen me mug at headquawtehs, an', damn et, he knows me face jes' f'om studyin' de pickcher."

"Wot wuz dat number he gave ye?"

"De devil on'y knows," answers Bill irascibly. "I s'pose et's de numbeh o' me pickcher in de Rogues' Gallery. But et's five yeahs since dat wuz took, an' how de hell he kin reckernise a guy wot he neveh seen—" And Bill shakes his head in perplexity and then gives vent to a volley of profanities designed to relieve his outraged sensibilities.

I think of the girl whom we met in the Bowery Music Hall, and of her characterization of Inspector Byrnes and his men — men with "eyes like cameras" — and of Bill's boastful defiance of the detective force; for now, as I cast a glance at his wrathful countenance, I feel that his bragadocio has quite deserted him, and that the Man in Brown has inspired him with distrust of his own powers, and with fear of those penetrating eyes which recognize a malefactor so readily amid the crowds upon the street. And Bill curses and curses, and when he concludes his profane and blood-curdling peroration directed against the detective force and their chief, he begins all over again, in fear lest

he may inadvertently have omitted some worthy member of Byrnes' staff from the ban of condemned souls whom he consigns to the infernal regions in the exuberance of his fancy.

My thoughts are in confusion as we walk homeward.

Homeward!

I picture to myself the dirty fronts of the Water Street tenements, the dives which befoul the uninviting street, the wretched forms slinking in and out of the dark hallways, the vile saloon below our room wherein men and women congregate at night and sing and shout until long past midnight.

I am not repelled by vice, for I, too, have wallowed in the dirt with the other beasts of my species; but of late there has been a strange seething within me, a strange murmur which I cannot define, or explain, or understand. Something within me has changed. Something has made me discontented with my lot, with my life, my companions, and my surroundings. I know not what it is that has caused this change. I have never read of the storm and stress period of youth, when the soul stirs uneasily in revolt. I know nothing of the soul: I am scarcely conscious that I possess one. I have never read of it, and have not heard of it since I was a child, sitting upon my mother's knees.

But of late there have been times when the childhood which I cast behind me when I went forth into the world has appeared to pursue me; and I have been haunted by dim visions of the long ago, and by a face long absent from my dreams,— the face of her who bore me. Sometimes (and especially during the past few months) I have caught a glimpse of two tender brown eyes fixed upon me — gazing at me from a far distance, as through a haze — and I have heard the sweet, low voice (so soft, so infinitely tender) which I loved to hear when I was but a child. The eyes are



so far away, the face is so dim, the voice is so faint — they come to me from such a distance, and yet they fill me with sadness and unrest.

What ails me? What has come over me? What has changed me? I do not know. I only know that something binds me to my past; that the ties which I thought broken were not broken after all; that, whether I will or no, I feel the tug of my childhood upon my sleeves, and cannot shake it off.

And this after years of degradation, of evil companionship and evil ways!

What is there in my present life to link me to my childhood? — Nothing.

(And yet that tug of baby fingers upon my sleeves: why can't I shake it off?)

I am going to what this day is my home — going to the little room in Water Street where I pass my nights after spending the early evenings with my companion in saloons or concert halls.

The untidy bed with its soiled linen torn and spotted; the cracked, discoloured walls whose plaster is falling off; the chipped woodwork whose green paint is scratched and dirtied; the warped floors littered with papers: — I am going back to my room in Water Street, above the saloon wherein men and women sing and quarrel and fight when night descends upon the city.

My thoughts are in confusion as we walk along. I am smarting under the indignity to which I have been subjected by the Man in Brown. The look of suspicion in his eyes, his contemptuous bearing towards me, his assumption that I am a malefactor, and, most of all, his keen scrutiny of my features so that he may recognise me if he met me again (a scrutiny which seared me like the touch of hot iron): all these fill me with a sense of humiliation and re-



sentment. But, by the time that our lodging-house has been reached, the tumult within me has subsided, and I am quite calm as I impart to Red Bill the thought which is uppermost in my mind, and the decision which I have reached respecting my future course of action.

I am seated upon a rickety chair at the window, and he is seated upon the bed, chewing a quid of tobacco, and quite unprepared for the thunderbolt which is about to descend.

"Well, Sam," he says, clearing his throat preparatory to broaching a subject which he knows to be disagreeable to me; "our dough's gettin' less an' less, an' et seems te me et's 'bout time te make a strike. Don' ye t'ink so?"

Receiving no reply, he leans forward confidentially, and rests one hand upon my knee while he continues persuasively:

"Ye see, Sam, et's all damn foolishness te say ye don' like te be a dip. W'y, boy, ye're jes' cut out fer one."

He pauses a moment so that his words may duly impress me; then, raising his voice until it rings with the enthusiasm which he affects, he cries: "Look at dem han's o' yourn — long an' narreh like a goil's! An' dem finge's! W'y, dey're t'in an' long an' — w'y, dey're de slickes' finge's I eveh seen — jes' made fer bringin' de hangeh (opening a handbag) or liftin' de leddeh. Sam, me boy," he continues, rising, and clapping me enthusiastically upon the shoulder, "wit' dem han's o' yourn ye kin get away wit' a hull front (take everything from a victim) an' neveh run no risk o' bein' pinched. Ye'll be king o' de dips, ole pal, in no time. W'y, dere's a forchun in et fer you, an' all ye got te do is te gadder in de stakes."

He is so eager to impress me, and so confident of moving me by his glowing picture of the success to be achieved if I but act upon his suggestion, that I find it hard to undeceive him. After all, he has been a friend to me. His

motives in befriending me and sharing with me his plunder may not have been wholly unselfish. He doubtless looked confidently forward to the time when I should become an expert thief and share my plunder with him. But, after all, he has been loyal to me, and has supported me in my idleness, and I find it hard to dash his hopes and to disillusion him.

I gaze out of the window and watch a lean, bony horse pulling at a wagon loaded with heavy boxes. A boy of sixteen or seventeen is driving the horse, and, as they pass the window at which I am seated, the boy strikes the overburdened animal a sharp blow with a heavy whip. At the same moment a young ragamuffin upon the sidewalk throws a stone which strikes the horse upon the shoulder, whereupon the driver, in righteous indignation, makes a lunge at the ragamuffin, and the latter scurries off, laughing derisively. I take in the scene, and dully wonder how many boxes there are upon the wagon, and what their weight is, and whether the boy who threw the stone lives across the street in the three story brick building whose windows are out of plumb, and whether the sour-visaged woman in a blue waist who leans out of the third story window is his mother. And then (still gazing out of the window) I say, in a low, lifeless voice:

“I ain’ goin’ te be no dip.”

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SONG OF LABOR

For a few moments there is silence in the room behind me: then I hear the bed creak as Red Bill seats himself heavily upon it: and the next moment I hear his voice, whining, pleading, expostulatory, in my ears.

"Not goin' te be a dip? W'y, Sam, yez don' know wot —"

"I ain' goin' te be no dip." I repeat the words with dogged determination as I close my lips tightly and turn round so that we face each other.

There is something pathetic in the look of disappointment in his eyes, and in the bewildered expression upon his face. I know that he had looked forward to the day when I should become a conspicuous figure in the Underworld; but not until this moment have I fully realised what hopes he had centred in my ultimate success in a career of crime. And, as I realise that this big, burly individual has learned to repose a certain degree of confidence in the boy who refuses to be led any longer by those whom he has followed in the past, I feel a sense of pride in my own powers stealing over me, mingled with a certain disdain for the rogue who has been looking forward to the day when he could lean upon me and profit by my crimes.

"Now see here, Sam," he says, gazing at me with troubled countenance; "don' make a damn jay o' yerself an' feel sorry w'en et's too late. Don' t'row yer chances away w'en maybe yez won' neveh git 'em no more. Don' be a jay."



He raises his hand, and moves his forefinger up and down to punctuate his arguments, and continues earnestly:

"I knows a hund'ed dips — boys o' fawteen o' fifteen — as is gettin' along fine, an' ain' got half yer sense. An' dere's lots o' big guys ez can't hold a candle to ye an' is makin' a forchun. W'y, some o' dem guns we seed at Rosenbaum's is wort' a hunderd t'ousan' 'f dey're wort' a cent, an'—"

"How long have you been a dip?" I query, interrupting his plea.

"Eveh since I wuz a kid."

"An' how much money have ye saved?"

The question disconcerts him, for he shifts about, and clears his throat before answering.

"Dat ain' got nahtin' te do wit' de question —"

"Et's got a hull lot te do wit' de question," I rejoin quickly. "Ye knows ez well as I do dat no crook kin keep his swag longeh dan et takes te git rid of et in a gamblin' joint or in some oddeh way. Ye knows dat de end o' de game is de jail or de gutteh. I don' care te die in de pen, an' I don' care te die a temato-can-stiff, so I'm goin' to staht me life oveh ag'in, an' staht new."

He stares at me in bewilderment, and rubs his hand over his red beard as though hoping thereby to collect his thoughts; and finally he folds his hands dejectedly and says, in plaintive accents:

"Wuzen' I pal o' yourn, an' didn' I get ye out o' de pen w'en you an' me wuz jugged?"

"Ye helped me in de train w'en you an' me made a get-away, an' you an' me've been pals, but I just about decided that I ain' goin' to be no dip, an'," I add firmly, "dat ends et."

"En's et? De hell et does!" shouts Red Bill, springing



to his feet in sudden fury, and, ere I can defend myself, he has me by the throat.

The change from pathetic despondency to raging anger is so sudden and unexpected that I am wholly unprepared for this attack. As his fingers close about my throat I catch sight of his red hair and beard, and his flushed face, and his blue eyes gleaming with anger; and the next moment I am struggling in his grasp, and am striking out blindly, not caring where my blows land.

I must have struck him a blow which staggers him, for I feel his fingers relax; and, as I leap from my chair and escape from his clutch, I perceive that the blood is flowing from his nose, and that his face is bruised.

I rush to the door, and, as I open it and cast a glance behind me, I see him coming after me with a knife in his hand. He has drawn it from his pocket, and has opened a thin, sharp blade, and there is murder in his eyes as he raises the hand which grasps it. But before he can use it, I have closed the door in his face, and am flying down the stairs.

The door is violently flung open behind me, and the knife comes hurtling after me, just missing my shoulder, and dropping with a thud upon the sidewalk. I pause but a moment to pick it up, and then run at full speed along the street, and turn into the Bowery, and, after another block, turn around, and perceive that I am not followed, and thereupon slacken my speed and proceed leisurely.

It is done! I have cast my past behind me. I have severed my association with my companions of Hoboland and of the World of Prey. I have not a friend on earth, but I am no longer bound to the Underworld. I am seventeen years of age, and feel myself a man. I am free to begin my life anew — to live honestly, and to gain an honest

livelihood. I have flung from me the hobo's disdain for labor. I am willing to work, ready to work, and shall find work to do.

The City is singing in my ears a new song — the Song of Labor. It issues forth from every window which I pass, from every store which displays its wares in my sight, from every face bent over its work in the upper story windows of the red brick factories, from every machine which hums and whirs in my ears.

The men who sweep the crosswalks, the youths who drive the carts, the women who sit at windows with thread and needle in their hands, the policemen who guard men's property, the well-dressed merchants and the humble clerks — all these join the chorus of the song until it grows sonorous, and swells forth full and free.

I hear it in the roar of the elevated trains which shake the trestles above my head as they rush along with their loads of men hurrying to labour or seeking their homes. I hear it in the clatter of horses' hoofs upon the pavements, and in the rumble of wagons rolling over the streets. It rises from the throats of the street urchins who run about with their bundles of newspapers under their arms. The bearded peddlers upon the streets intone it as they push their carts across the rough pavements; and though their faces are careworn with struggle, and their cheeks hollow with want, there is a dignity in their features which stamps them as heroic protagonists of a lifelong tragedy.

The toilers hum it on their way to work. The factory hands hear it, and their eyes light up. The girls from the sweatshops hear it, and they expand their sunken chests, and swing their thin, bloodless arms, for to them it sings of bread, bread, for the hungry ones at home.

The Song of Labor rises from the City's streets, full, deep-toned, majestic, and its sonorous murmur rever-

berates in my ears. I hear the song which echoes round about me, and my heart interprets its message. To live is to labor, and to labor is to live.

I am prepared to live.

I put my hands in my pocket and draw forth my money. Fifteen cents. Received from Red Bill — stolen from the woman whose pocket he picked — this is all the money I possess in the world.

I know not a soul: I have not a friend on earth; but I am determined to seek work and to find it.

I walk jauntily along the street, with no regrets for the past and no misgivings for the future. I am young, and the city is big, and I have fifteen cents in my pocket.

## CHAPTER V

WHEREIN I SEEK EMPLOYMENT AND FIND NONE, AND AGAIN  
ENCOUNTER THE MAN IN BROWN

I walk down to the post-office, cross Broadway, and enter Barclay Street. I go into the first business-house west of Broadway, and accost a black-bearded man with a skull-cap, who is jotting down a memorandum upon a pad.

"I'm lookin' fer a job. D'ye need any help?"

"No," he says curtly, without looking up.

I enter the next office, and am informed that they have all the men that they need. Undaunted, I enter every office in the block between Broadway and Church Street, then renew my efforts on the latter street, and turn into Vesey. Nowhere do I receive any encouragement.

I traverse both sides of Vesey Street, then walk along Broadway to Fulton: both sides of Fulton Street, and once more along Broadway to Dey. Several of the men whom I address inform me that they have more employés now than they require. One brusque individual commands me to "Get out, and be damn quick about it!" Another casts one glance at my shabby clothes, and informs me that they don't engage tramps. The majority of those whom I interrogate merely say they require no more men.

Along both sides of Dey Street, and into Broadway once more: thence I turn into Cortlandt Street, where I encounter the throng that has emerged from the Pennsylvania ferry-boat at the foot of the street. I proceed half a block and then am stopped by a man whose hand descends



roughly upon my shoulder. I turn with a start, and find the Man in Brown at my side.

"Didn't I warn you this morning not to go below the Dead Line?"

"I—I fehgot," I falter. "I—I wuz lookin' fer woik."

"Looking for work, eh?" repeats the Man in Brown, with a sneer. "Well, you can't work this section of the town while I'm here. Where's your pal?"

"I dunno."

"Don't get gay with me, Sam Smith, or whatever your name is;" and here he gazes at me so fixedly with his sharp grey eyes that I lower my head in confusion. "I'm asking you where your pal is."

"I cut loose f'om 'im; he ain' no pal o' mine no more," I mutter sheepishly, for somehow I am overawed by his big, heavy form, and by those eyes which seem to burn into my brain.

"Oh, come now!" he says sceptically and impatiently. "Don't give me any of that guff. Just tell me what your game is down this way, and be quick about it."

"I wuz lookin' fer woik —"

He makes a gesture of impatience, and frowns darkly upon me, and mutters an oath; then, raising his hand, he signals to some one who is standing upon the opposite side of the street, and the next moment we are joined by a middle-aged man in a blue serge suit. He is as tall as the man in brown, but is thin and angular. His features are delicately chiselled, his eyes are blue, and his cheeks have just the faintest touch of color.

"Here, Jim!" says the Man in Brown to his companion; "take a peep at this here guy. I haven't found out yet what his record is; but he travels with Red Bill, a dip who used to be pretty well known until he went up the line (to

prison) a few years ago. Now he's back in town, and this guy with him. Here, you! Show your eyes!"

He grasps me roughly by the chin (pressing his fingers so tightly against my jaw that I wince) and forces my head back so suddenly that I stagger. The Man in Blue gazes into my eyes and says: "Hm! What are you doing down this way? What's your lay (game)?"

"I'm lookin' fer woik," I answer sullenly, scowling upon them.

"Well, you'd better look for work elsewhere," says the Man in Blue, with a gesture of dismissal. "Beat it, or you'll be up before the chief before you're much older!"

I feel tempted to remonstrate, and to give vent to my indignation; but the Man in Brown gives me a shove which almost fells me, and mutters gruffly: "Beat it! d'ye hear?" and I shuffle off, feeling like a beast that is baited beyond endurance and yet lacks the courage to attack its tormentor.

All my dreams have taken flight: of my good resolutions only a shred remains. I feel myself beaten at the very outset of my struggle.

Why should I lead an honest life? — Who cares? Who trusts me? Who has confidence in me?

No one.

Am I forever to be stigmatised as a criminal because the penitentiary forced me into the companionship of the blackbirds of the Underworld? Will no one afford me an opportunity to work honestly and to lead an honest life?

WORK — WORK — WORK. The Song of Labor still rings in my ears, but fainter now, and less majestically. I turn into City Hall Park, and fling myself dejectedly upon one of the benches.

A discarded morning paper lies upon the bench. I

seize it, and begin to read the news. In the course of time I reach the employment advertisement columns, and suddenly realize that there may be business men in this city as anxious to find a man willing to work as I am to find a man willing to employ me.

I glance through the "want" columns and select five advertisements which appear to offer some hope to a young man unfamiliar with any branch of employment, but eager to learn. The business houses which I have selected are all located within a mile of the City Hall, within walking distance, that is; for I have no carfare to spend.

I rise from my bench and walk to Leonard Street, hesitate a few moments in front of a store whose window bears the announcement that the proprietor is a wholesale dealer in paper and paper bags, and enter. A young clerk informs me that I am too late, that fully a hundred applicants were turned away in the course of the day, and that the position was filled this morning.

Undismayed, I next seek an office in Canal Street, find it — position was filled this morning.

Then across New York to the East Side, into Grand Street to Orchard, only to find that — the position was filled early this morning.

Back again to the West Side — across the Bowery and Broadway, and into Prince Street. No; they have not yet filled the position. My heart gives a leap. At last!

What can I do? inquires my informant, a man of about forty.

What can I do? I am tempted to smile at the absurdity of the question. I have red blood in my veins, and hope in my heart, and unlimited confidence in my ability to gain a foothold in the world through the labor of my hands.

What can I do? — "Anything," I answer unhesitatingly.



"Anything?" He gazes at me in amusement. "Can you do bookkeeping?"

"N-no," I falter in confusion, realizing that, howsoever willing I may be to labor, there are certain fields of effort which must forever remain closed to one whose education has been gained in hitting the road and battering for bread.

"Well, we need a bookkeeper. I don't think you'll do." Crestfallen, I turn from the door.

"Anything?"— What a fool I am!

Why "anything"? Why not "nothing"?

What have I ever learned to fit me for the world's work? —

Nothing.

What has my life in Hoboland or in the World of Crime taught me of honest work in store, or shop, or office? — Nothing.

What am I fit for? — Nothing.

But, somehow, the red blood courses through my veins, and my heart flings the lie to my brain, and, while reason wails, hope laughs aloud.

Over to West Street, and down along the river front, where the Hudson laves the piers which extend out into the river, and the ferryboats cross from shore to shore, and the big transatlantic steamers come into port, emitting black smoke from their funnels, and gliding like gigantic whales along the centre of the stream.

Down along the river front, where the heavy trucks rattle across the stony pavements, and the horse cars roll up and down the street, with the conductors in the rear, and the drivers in the front, spurring on the lean and weary horses to continuous effort.

Down West Street, past the old brick houses, low and shaky; past the markets with their meats and fish and vegetables; past the fruit-stands on the corners, till I reach a



little fruit store just big enough for a man to turn around in, provided he be not too fat.

There is a handsome, black-bearded Italian standing on the threshold; and within the store is a young man sorting oranges.

"D'ye need a man?" I ask of the Italian at the door.

"No. Me gotta de man. No needa more help."

I turn away, and saunter back to Park Row. The sun has set, and twilight comes on apace, and then there follows that brief interval between twilight and darkness when a blue mist seems to descend upon New York, and all the city grows dim, and colorful, and beautiful.

The sky is dark, with just a touch of blue and green softening the darkness. The streets are bathed in a misty blue; the harsh outlines of the frowning tenements are softened; a dark blue haze envelops the towering office buildings; and all the city is swathed in a filmy mantle of wondrous beauty.

The East River and the North River become blue streams flowing into a dark blue bay in which ships sail like shadows dotted with tiny lights. Blue are the church steeples, and the roofs, and the dark window panes; and blue and splashed with light the cars which roll along the streets, and the elevated trains which rush across the dark trestles. Blue are the shadowy figures upon the streets — the horses and wagons speeding across the pavements, the men and women hurrying over the crosswalks, the crowds walking along the sidewalks. In the windows lights appear: upon the street corners electric lights begin to sputter, or gas-lamps burst into flame. The dark blue sky grows darker, and tiny stars appear in the heavens. And then the blue mist becomes absorbed in the black shadows, and darkness descends, and the great city's host of lights pour their garish yellow flood into the gloom.

I enter a saloon, pay five cents for a glass of beer, and satisfy my hunger with sandwiches at the free-lunch counter. Then I saunter along the streets, lonely and dejected, until ten o'clock, when I enter City Hall Park and hunt for a seat on one of the benches. I have ten cents in my pocket, and I cannot afford to pay for a lodging to-night; so I stroll along the walks of the park and glance about on all sides as I walk along. Bench after bench — and all occupied.

Behold the Homeless Ones!

Young boys, striplings — some with hardened faces, some with features refined and delicate. Some with the atmosphere of Hoboland about them — truants who have fled from home because the call of the road was in their boyish ears, the glamour of the road in their young and eager eyes: others who have no home save the public park, no roof but the sky above their heads. — Homeless.

And here sit men in the prime of life, but devoid of ambition. Men who have fought and have succumbed. Good men, bad men, heroes, cowards, tramps, rascals, honest men — men with ambition throttled by the strong, black, pitiless hands of Adversity. Here they sit — men in the prime of life, but devoid of ambition.

And yet these men, too, once had dreams as fair as yours and mine. When they were boys the world was peopled with giants created for them to conquer. The deeds of heroes thrilled that which was heroic in their souls. All the past ages contributed to the making of these men. All the world's past and present triumphs entered into their making, and all the world's past and present failures contributed to their undoing.

The dreams are gone: the giants have conquered: and this the result — the bench in the park for a bed, and the sky for a roof!

I pass a woman, hatless, bedraggled, sitting upon a bench between two men, and staring before her with fixed, wide-open eyes, as though Hell yawned before her and she feared to move.

God! what a look of dread in those big, wild eyes!

This is the park at night, with the arc-lights sputtering overhead, and the shadows flitting across the paths — with Broadway to the west, dark and drowsy with sleep, and Newspaper Row to the east, twinkling with lights, and humming with the sounds of preparation as the presses await the white sheets. To the south the Post Office uprears itself, white and spectral in the darkness; and to the north the City Hall peers forth amid the shadows, majestic in its simple beauty as on the day when its marble façade dazzled the infant city a century ago.

I feel so tired, I can scarcely walk. The electric lamps sputter above the paths; the shadows of the trees waver in the light; the moonbeams rest upon the fountain; the stars shine dimly overhead.

So tired! — Here, in old Dutch days, the soldiers marched to and fro, parading from Fort Amsterdam up to the Common on training days: and here, where they once manœuvred, I march to and fro, vainly seeking a seat where I may rest. My eyes feel heavy, and my limbs are like lead. I must lie down somewhere, I care not where, and rest. I fling myself upon the grass, in the shadow of a crowded bench, and go to sleep.

I am awakened by the impact of a heavy stick upon my feet. I open my eyes, and find a policeman standing over me. He has roused me by the simple process of striking me with his night-stick.

And no wonder! For I have committed a heinous offence. I have slept upon the grass in a public park. — Shocking!



“Don’t ye know ye can’t sleep on the grass?” he growls indignantly. “Get up, or I’ll pull ye in.”

He speaks to me as though I were a cowed beast; and, like a cowed beast, I get up without a murmur, and move on.

I leave City Hall Park, walk over to West Street, and down that dark thoroughfare toward Battery Park. I do not venture to walk down Broadway after my encounters with the Man in Brown, so I stroll along the West Side docks until I reach Bowling Green and find Battery Park before me. Down along the river front, past the yawning entrances to innumerable piers, I slink along like a cowed beast, gazing suspiciously at every wayfarer whom I encounter, lest the Man in Brown appear suddenly before me and recognize me before I can escape. And thus, still glancing furtively about me, I enter Battery Park and breathe more freely.

Here I find a seat upon a bench beside a rheumatic tramp who complains that the moist air from the harbor which washes the extremity of the park fills his bones with aches, and who groans every few minutes and then swears volubly as he turns his poor, racked body to the right and to the left; and, with his groans and curses echoing in my ears, I fall asleep.

When I awake it is still quite early. The day is breaking, but the sun has not yet risen; and over the harbor and the Lower Bay a thin mist is hovering. The birds are singing in the trees above my head; and in the distance is heard the faint whistle of a steamer entering the harbor.

There are about a score of homeless men asleep upon the benches; and one woman with a thin, sallow face, is holding in her arms a little slumbering babe. Her head has sunk upon her breast; the hands which clasp the child have loosened their hold. They are white hands, with



delicate pink nails which look beautiful, notwithstanding the grime upon them. She was pretty once.

My muscles ache in consequence of the cramped position which I have maintained through the night; so I change my position, and endeavor to snatch another hour's sleep, for I am still tired and unrefreshed. I find that I cannot fall asleep, so I lie there with closed eyes until I hear a voice in the distance proclaim warningly: "Cheese et! De cop!" and then another voice, closer at hand, repeats the warning; and in another moment the park is awake, and some of the wayfarers are preparing to resume their wanderings, and some stretch themselves and yawn, but retain their seats — and down the path, big and majestic, swinging his stick and walking leisurely, as befits majesty, comes the policeman, the bull (as the Underworld knows him) the enemy to every dweller in the Abyss, from the boy who must not play ball in the streets to the thief who must not steal another's property. The rising sun shines upon the brass buttons of his coat, and decks him in the gold of royalty. Enter the policeman: exit the tramp. Night and Day cannot exercise joint sovereignty. Night flees — and I flee with the sons of night.

Ten cents in my pocket, and no work! I shall go without breakfast to-day. The ten cents will suffice for dinner and supper. After that —!

I must find work — I must find work — to-day!

In this great city —!

I walk up West Street, past the big wharves and the steamboats at anchor, and ever and anon I glance around, on the alert for the Man in Brown or his confederates, nor do I breathe freely until Fulton Street has been left far behind, and Canal Street stretches out to my left.

I inquire for work, and there is no work to be obtained. Office after office, and warehouse after warehouse, and fac-

tory after factory, but no one wishes to employ the ragged, uneducated youth whose heart grows heavier and whose eyes grow more wistful as the weary hours drag along. Some speak to me kindly, and some curtly, and most of those whom I approach scan my ragged clothes suspiciously, and turn away with a sharp "No!"

Through Canal Street, and through Grand Street — and now the factory whistles are blowing to announce the hour of noon, and my stomach is aching for food. I enter a saloon, purchase a glass of beer, and devour four bologna sandwiches; then, after sitting at one of the tables for an hour, reading yesterday's paper, and resting myself, I resume my search for employment.

Five cents in my pocket, and no employment to be obtained!

All afternoon I tramp the city's streets. All afternoon I go from office to office and repeat my inquiry in dull, lifeless, mechanical tones, await the inevitable answer, and then move on again like a mechanical toy. Dusk finds me in Washington Square, sitting upon a bench, and pondering.

Five cents in my pocket — and I am hungry.

I have had but one meal to-day, and I long for a cup of coffee and some rolls. For five cents I can purchase but a meagre meal in a restaurant: better for me to enter a saloon, buy a glass of beer, and help myself to a substantial meal at the free-lunch counter.

Five cents between myself and starvation. One more meal and then — What?

Starve or steal — Which?

My head feels heavy: my limbs ache: I do not seek an answer to my question: I am hungry, and I want food.

But what of to-morrow? What if I spend my last cent to-day and have nothing left wherewith to purchase a meal

on the morrow? Should I not rather go hungry to-night, and assure myself of at least one meal on the coming day?

I am hungry.

"Te hell wit' te-morreh!" I mutter savagely, and, rising, I hunt for a saloon.

With hunger appeased I return to the Square, sit upon the bench until nine o'clock, then search for a secluded spot where I may lie outstretched upon the ground, and sleep. I find a bench hidden in the dark shadow of an elm which screens it from the glare of an electric light. Crawling beneath the bench where I may hide, in the darkness, from the watchful eye of any interloper, I stretch myself upon the soft earth, and fall asleep.

## CHAPTER VI

WHICH RELATES HOW I STARVE, HOW I RETURN A LOST  
HANDBAG AND HOW I AM NOT REWARDED

Another day — and on this day no penny in my pocket and no food in my stomach. I walk the streets, weak and hungry, and search in vain for work.

The City is pitiless. Men, glancing sharply at my ragged garments, behold in me a tramp — nothing more. They know nothing of the struggle within my soul, nor of the dejection which is creeping over me. They do not see the despair which is settling down upon me. They read the stains and patches upon my clothes, but cannot read the agony within my heart.

Noon comes on, and I am famished. A rat is gnawing at my stomach. I feel tempted to stand upon the street corner and beg for pennies, as I did in former days; but I restrain myself and say: "No. Not yet. I will not return to the hobo's life again until I succumb wholly to despair. I will not give up. I will not admit defeat.— Not yet. Not yet."

Afternoon! — and rows of houses staring blankly at me, and scores of men shaking their heads and glancing at me suspiciously, and overhead the sun shining in the heavens as benignly as though all things were beautiful, and all men just.

Dusk. The stores close. The doors are shut in my face. Men leave their desks. Women hurry home to supper and rest. Another day gone!

I walk back to Washington Square. I do not feel as



hungry as I felt earlier in the day. The rat has ceased to gnaw; but I feel weak. My head is aching: my feet feel light, as though I were treading on air. I feel the palpitation of my heart, and can readily count its beats. I seat myself upon a bench, and try to collect my thoughts.

I am filled with anger and indignation. I have said to myself that I shall hereafter live an honest life; and in order to demonstrate my sincerity I am forced to starve.

I have said to men: "Give me work that I may live honestly;" and their answer has been: "Starve!"

My heart has cried unto the world: "Open to me the doors of hope!" and the answer has been flung back: "The doors are closed.— Starve!"

Starve? — Why starve? Why not live? If not honestly, then dishonestly.

God knows that I started out upon my new life with the strong determination to amend my ways. I meant to be honest henceforth, and to live a decent life. But there is no one to help me, no one to stretch out a finger for me to grasp, no one willing to offer me any work or to enable me to purchase a crumb of bread. Why, then, should I struggle any longer? I am faint with hunger, and my soul is growing weak.

Yonder is a well-dressed man reeling along the street. He is alone. How easy it would be for me to join him, to affect good-fellowship, accompany him, take his arm, and pick his pocket! Before I am aware of it I find myself speculating as to the size of the haul which I might make from such a victim.

Or consider this young woman who is approaching along the path which leads past the bench whereon I am sitting. She carries a black beaded handbag upon her arm, and the handbag is *open*.

Evidently she is unaware of the fact that the contents

of the bag are being carelessly exposed, for she walks along with easy grace, staring straight before her. She passes the bench whereon I am seated, and my eyes follow her. I have scarcely glanced at her face. I pay no heed to her shapely form: my eyes are fascinated by the open bag, and by a little black purse reposing upon a white handkerchief in it.

I speculate upon the ease with which that purse could be abstracted. What method should I pursue if I were an expert thief? Should I hurry ahead of the woman in a roundabout way, then turn about to meet her, jostle against her, and steal the purse while brushing past? or should I follow her instead of hurrying ahead, overtake her, and abstract the purse while hastening past her?

*The handbag is open.* How my eyes follow it! How it fascinates me!

And I am starving.

Perhaps she is rich. She seems to be well-dressed. Perhaps she would scarcely miss the loss of a few dollars. Surely, the money means much less to her than it does to me. She is not hungry: she is doubtless well-fed, while I—I am faint and weak, and my heart is beating like a trip hammer.

Before I am aware of it I have risen, and have advanced a step as though about to follow her. The open handbag is hypnotising me. It draws me on, and I cannot resist. I instinctively take another step forward.

I wonder vaguely why I do not hasten after her, why I take a few steps and then falter, why I do not rush forward boldly in pursuit, why my limbs feel so light and buoyant, and, above all, why I am so cowardly as to hesitate when a purse is held dangling before my eyes.

I conquer my reluctance, and, straightening up, boldly hurry after the woman. She is about a hundred feet in

advance of me, but I quickly cut down the distance, and draw closer with each step. And then, as I draw nearer, a strange thing happens. The purse which has fascinated me is dislodged by some movement of her body as she hurries on, and falls out of the handbag to the ground, and there it lies, directly in my path, while its owner proceeds on her way, wholly unconscious of her loss.

I stop, too astonished to move — paralysed, dumb-founded, turned to stone (call it what you will) — feeling that luck has turned of a sudden, that fortune is with me, that I have but to stretch out my hand to acquire the means wherewith to satisfy my hunger.

I pause for a moment only, then hurry forward, bend down, grasp the purse, and put it into my pocket.

I cast a quick glance round me. No one is near. I am unobserved.

My first impulse is to hasten to some more secluded portion of the park, assure myself that the purse is not empty, and then seek a restaurant. I feel joyous, elated, triumphant. The pangs of hunger are less severe than they were earlier in the day; but my mouth is very parched, and my heart is beating rapidly, and I feel unnerved and excited. I turn and retrace my steps for a distance of about ten feet, with the feeling that everything about me is unreal. Then I turn again, and stare after the trim figure of my deliverer, who, unconscious of the service she has rendered me, is proceeding leisurely on her way.

Perhaps she will be liberal. Perhaps she will give me sufficient to purchase many meals. But if the sum be small and yet suffice for the purchase of one substantial meal I shall be amply repaid for my honesty. I decide to yield to my impulse, and to surrender the treasure within my hand.

I hurry after her, stumbling at times and walking un-



steadily, for my limbs are so light that they hardly feel strong enough to carry my weight. My haste makes my heart beat so fast that I gasp for breath; but, after two or three minutes, I overtake her, and touch her upon the arm with the purse.

“Say!” I gasp.

I am so weak that the exertion of hurrying after her leaves me faint and trembling, and gasping for breath. She turns with a start; and then I perceive that she is a woman of about thirty, blonde, blue-eyed and comely, with a dark blue dress which fits her snugly, and a red ribbon about her throat, and a plain gold brooch on her breast. All this I observe, but not very clearly, for it is growing dark; and the blue veil which enshrouds New York just before darkness descends is resting upon all things; and a faintness steals over me and dims my sight.

“I — I — found — et,” I gasp, holding out the purse. And then I add, in what is almost a whisper: “Yez — dropped — et.”

With a startled exclamation she raises her handbag, perceives that it is open, and turns to me gratefully.

“How careless of me!” she murmurs sweetly, accepting the purse with a gracious smile. “Thank you very, very much.” Then she nods, turns from me, and walks on.

I stand there, breathing hard, oppressed by a weight upon my chest. I gaze after her uncomprehendingly — wild-eyed, dazed, wrathful, — feeling tempted to overwhelm her with curses, and yet so sorely disappointed that I cannot utter a sound.

Fool! Fool that I was! — The purse lay in my hand — I had even dropped it into my pocket. It was mine, for I had found it. It meant life to me — LIFE! And I had surrendered it because of a foolish impulse to act hon-



estly, and a foolish assumption that my honesty would be rewarded with the gift of a meal or two.

And instead of food or money, it is a calm "Thank you!"

Stuff this into your stomach, fool! Thrive on it — grow fat on it — this gentle "thank you" with which you must satisfy your hunger. Aye, starve on it, fool, and thank your honesty for thus gratifying your appetite!

A terrible rage seizes me. The hot blood rushes to my head. I glare after the trim form of the young woman and feel half tempted to kill her. I raise my fists, and shake them at her, and then shout, in a voice almost choked with rage: "Gawd damn yer soul, ye damn —!"

The foul, insulting epithets break from my lips in a torrent. She hears them (as I meant that she should) and turns with a little cry of fear, and stops, and then draws back as though I had struck her, and there is a look of fear and horror upon her face at sight of the irate vagabond whose insults she is powerless to check.

"Wh — what — is the matter?" she falters, shrinking in the semi-gloom as though fearful of attack.

For answer, I raise my hands helplessly, stretch them out before me with a gesture of entreaty, and sob forth, in a suffocating voice: "I'm starvin'!" and, at the words, I drop down in a faint.

## CHAPTER VII

### WHEREIN I DINE IN A RESTAURANT AND SATISFY MY APPETITE

I think that I must have been unconscious but a moment. I open my eyes, and find that she is just about to bend down over me with a bottle of smelling salts in her hand. She puts the bottle to my nose, but I draw my head away and murmur faintly: "I'm all right," and weakly raise myself to a sitting position.

"Feeling better now?" Her voice is rich and melodious; and there is a sympathetic ring to her words which makes me feel ashamed of my outburst.

"Yes."

"Are you hungry?" A senseless and inane question to ask under the circumstances.

I nod my head.

"When did you last have a meal?"

"Yestehday aftehnoon."

"Nothing to-day?" She evidently suspects that I may be shamming.

"Nothin' since yestehday," I answer faintly, struggling to my feet. She takes hold of my arm, and assists me to rise; then, opening her purse, takes out a dollar bill and hands it to me.

"T'anks," I murmur, grasping the money eagerly, and steadying myself against a bench. She is about to go, and has taken a step or two, when some thought strikes her and impels her to turn back.

"What were you doing to-day?"

"Lookin' fer woik!"

"All day?"

I nod.

"I should think a man who really wants to work could find something if he looks around; but if you really want employment you can call at my husband's office to-morrow and he'll find some work for you to do. I'll speak to him about it to-night. Here's his name and address."

I take the card which she hands me, and say: "T'anks," and I wish that I were educated, and that I possessed the ability to give adequate expression to my gratitude in fine phrases which would please her. But I can only utter a rough "T'anks," and curse the ignorance which closes my mouth when my heart is wide open with gratitude and thankfulness.

I hasten to a restaurant, and spend fifty cents in indulging my appetite. To-morrow the five-cent glass of beer and the free-lunch counter again: to-day a feast fit for a king.

I sit at a long table in a crowded dining-room which contains two other long tables and several short ones. There are about twenty men seated at my table, each of them tightly wedged in between two other men who are also tightly wedged in; and whenever one of them finishes his meal and prepares to leave the table, he finds that he cannot do so without the active co-operation of every other diner in his vicinity. Hence, the conclusion of a repast is indicated by the mystic word: "Spread!" whereupon we all proceed to spread.

I soon discover that divers of the dishes placed before me are encroaching, by reason of my restricted quarters, upon the domains of my neighbours: likewise that some of their choicest viands have carelessly been placed within the table area apparently apportioned to me alone.

"Pretty crowded," remarks a red-headed, freckle-faced man to my right, as I inadvertently splash him with a drop of hot soup.

"Yes, et is," I murmur, catching upon my plate a fried potato which has vaulted the platter of a gentleman, across the table, and has landed within my domains.

"Oh, excuse me," says the gentleman across the table, reaching over for a salt cellar.

"Et's all right," I murmur, upsetting a spoonful of soup upon his clean white cuffs as a waitress brushes past me and pushes my elbow.

I finish my roast beef, devour my pie, and, in preparing to leave the table, step heavily upon a foot close to mine.

"'Scuse me," I murmur apologetically to the man seated to my left.

"That was my foot," groans the Gentleman Across the Table.

But, even as I turn to him in confusion, I inadvertently tread again upon the inoffending foot beneath the table.

"Dat's too bad," I murmur in embarrassment, gazing sheepishly across the table at my unfortunate neighbour.

"That was my foot this time," growls the man at my left. But I flee in haste, without waiting to hear more.

I seat myself upon a bench in Washington Square, with a full stomach and a happy heart. I feel peaceful and contented. The trees murmur above my head, and nod to one another in the friendliest way, and stretch out their branches as though they are about to take each other's arms for a stroll through the park. And how they whisper! how softly and tenderly they call to one another! how the whisper runs from tree to tree that it is moonlight, and lovers' night, and all well with the world!

All well with the world! The stars have hung out their lanterns high overhead; the moon is rocking in a treetop,



and I see her winking and blinking between the branches ; the sky is all lighted up, and the clouds are hugging shining silver lamps to their breasts as they dance across the heavens.

All well with the world ! My hunger is satisfied. There is some prospect of securing employment on the morrow. I have fifty cents in my pocket. Fortune is kind to me. How peaceful is Washington Square in the moonlight ! How good it feels to live !

All is well with the world !

## CHAPTER VIII

### WHEREIN I GAIN A POSITION AND LOSE IT

Next morning at about eight o'clock I present myself at the offices of John A. Williams, importer of silks, on Broome Street. Mr. Williams occupies a loft on the third floor of a big brick building, and, as he has not yet arrived at his place of business, I am directed to seat myself in the anteroom and to wait for him.

After ten or fifteen minutes, a tall, dark man of about thirty-five enters the anteroom from without, gives me a sharp, scrutinizing look, and strides past me into the office. He has a black moustache, and black hair, and black eyes, and an aquiline nose. His face is thin, and repels me, for there is something hard and unsympathetic about its expression.

The four clerks who are seated at the four rolltop desks in the inner office, doing nothing in particular except discussing the merits of some of the damsels who disport themselves in the comic opera "Erminie," become absorbed in work as soon as the dark gentleman enters the anteroom, from which I am led to infer that he must be the proprietor. And, sure enough, I hear them greet him as Mr. Williams as soon as they find time to relinquish their arduous labors long enough to become aware of the fact that he has arrived. It is really astounding to observe how intensely absorbed they are in their work, and how unconscious they are of his presence until he greets them with a perfunctory "Good morning."

After keeping me waiting for fifteen or twenty minutes, one of the clerks approaches me and inquires whether I wish to speak to Mr. Williams. I nod, and am thereupon informed that I may see him; whereupon I enter the office, and find myself at the desk where Mr. Williams is seated, reading a letter.

"Well?" he queries sharply, glancing up.

"I wanted to ask 'f ye got any job fer me."

"Are you the boy who found Mrs. Williams' purse yesterday?"

"Yes, sir."

He lays down the letter and looks at me; scrutinizes my frayed and shiny clothes for a moment; then gazes into my eyes and says slowly: "I can't offer you much. I couldn't use you for anything except office boy at present. If you want to accept that position I'll start you in at six dollars a week."

"All right: I'm ready," I murmur gratefully.

"You'll have to get a new suit of clothes first. I can't use you in the clothes you've got on. Have you any money?"

"I got fifty cen's."

"Well, that'll hardly reach," he says with a smile. "Suppose I buy you a new suit: will you be satisfied to have me deduct a dollar a week until the clothes are paid for?"

"Soitinly."

"Then you can start in right away.— Jackson!"

At his call, one of the men in the office (a bald, pleasant looking man of about fifty) rises from his chair behind a rolltop desk and comes forward.

"Take this boy to Wilson and Jamel's, and buy him a suit of clothes, charging it to me."

"A suit for about how much?"

"Oh, it needn't be anything fancy. Something for about ten or twelve dollars will do, I guess."

"All right, sir."

So Mr. Jackson escorts me to a clothing store, where I am soon arrayed in a light grey suit costing ten dollars and fifty cents, and, as this is the first new suit that I have worn since I was a little child, I feel very strangely affected by my garments.

First of all, I feel strange unto myself, as though my identity had suddenly been changed, leaving me incapable of accustoming myself to the strange being who is myself and yet is some one else. As I walk along the streets I feel acutely self-conscious. The eyes of the passers-by seem focussed upon me. Their glances penetrate my very being. I read wonder and curiosity in every face that I encounter.

"Who are you?" is the query in every eye: and then follows a glance which says as plainly as words: "You are not Sam Gordin. Who are you?"

Every man and every woman that I meet gazes at me with eyes which dart forth the insistent query; and when I see men at work in the stores, and their eyes meet mine for a moment, I feel that they, too, are convinced that I not Sam Gordin, and are inquiring of me who I am.

I am quite proud of my new clothes. It seems to me as though every glance is focussed upon my garments, and I feel that every one admires them, or ought to admire them; and I cannot understand why two pretty young girls should pass me without even a glance at my beautiful grey suit.

I am not Sam Gordin. Sam Gordin was a hobo, an outcast, one of the wrecks of the Underworld, whereas I am a well-dressed youth, a young man employed in a large business house, a man with self-respect and ambition.



Or perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that I am a new Sam Gordin — as new as the clothes I wear — a regenerated Sam Gordin, filled with new life, new hopes, new ambition.

And what has made me so acutely conscious of the change? — A new suit of clothes.

Enveloped in the splendor of my recent acquisition I parade the streets, accompanied by Mr. Jackson, and wonder why everything seems so unreal; and, with the sense of unreality still upon me, I finally present myself to my employer for instructions.

"You still have your dirty shirt on, I see," he says, glancing up from his desk. "Jackson!"

At his impatient voice my bald-headed escort emerges from behind his desk and comes forward.

"Yes, sir."

"Why didn't you buy this boy a clean shirt, and collar and tie?"

"I didn't know —"

"Well, you ought to have known. You don't think I'd have any one in my office without a collar and tie, and with such a looking shirt!"

So once more we go forth, and this time I am arrayed in clean linen, and presented with a glaring red tie of my own selection. And, being now decked out like a thing of beauty, I am installed in the anteroom, and assume the duties of office boy.

On the day succeeding my entrance into mercantile life Mr. Williams questions me as to my resources, and, upon learning that I have but a few cents in my pocket, advances me three dollars on account of my weekly wages. This enables me to eat my modest meals without worrying about the future; and at the end of the week, when I receive the small balance due to me, I immediately hunt for

lodgings, for I feel that the dignity of my position demands my permanent withdrawal from the benches of the public parks, and my establishment as a lodger in quarters where the cost of a room will be commensurate with my means.

Accordingly, I engage lodgings, at a dollar and a half a week, in The Eastern Hotel, which is a four story brick building, with a saloon and office on the ground floor, and numerous sleeping rooms on the other floors. My room is located on the fourth story — a tiny room, just big enough for a bed, a washstand, and a chair — and here I enter into possession with a feeling of pride and gratification at the thought that I have paid for a week's lodgings in advance, and have sufficient money in my pocket to carry me through the week, provided that I limit my expenditures to the purchase of the bare necessities of life, and eschew all car rides, pies, and similar luxuries.

I soon find that I have done injustice to Mr. Williams in my first estimate of his qualities. Although his face impressed me as hard and unsympathetic in appearance, I soon learn to appreciate the warmth of heart which constantly manifests itself in his conduct towards me. His voice is generally stern, and his manner serious: it appears to me that his employées fear him: and yet there is something kindly in his manner, and in the smile which sometimes, though rarely, softens his face.

One day, about a month after entering upon my employment, I am walking along Canal Street on my way to work, when a familiar figure approaches me. I give a start as I recognize the Man in Brown; and fear grips me, and I feel my face flush as his eye meets mine.

Will he recognise me? Will he know me in my new clothes, my clean face, my altered appearance? Will he recognise in the trim youth whom he now encounters the

disreputable figure which he accosted a month ago? He casts a casual glance at me as we pass each other, and there is no look of recognition in his eyes. I breathe a sigh of relief.

Half a block further on I turn round. He is nowhere in sight. It is evident that he has turned the corner of the next street. My heart feels light again.

I walk briskly along Canal Street, revolving in my mind the events of the past few months, and elated at the thought that I am performing the duties required of me faithfully, and that my employer is satisfied with my work. A week ago he increased my wages to seven dollars and informed me that, if I continued to perform my work satisfactorily, he purposed to employ another office boy, and to entrust me with work involving greater responsibilities.

I hurry on until I arrive within a block of my place of employment. I halt at the corner, and, moved by a sudden impulse, cast a hasty glance backward.

As I do so, my heart gives a leap; the street swims round me for a moment; I feel as though I am about to fall.

*The Man in Brown is following me!*

I catch a glimpse of him, half a block away, at the very moment that he enters a doorway and disappears from view.

He has been following me (I feel it, I know it) — shadowing me as though I were a convict fleeing from justice. When he met me upon the street he recognised me, though he gave no sign of recognition — he recognised me, and forthwith proceeded to follow me as a hound follows the trail of a hare. What does he want of me? Why does he pursue me? Why does he not leave me in peace?

Again, as on the occasions of our previous encounters,



anger takes hold of me. I feel enraged at the thought that this man dares to hound me. I am conscious of my impotence in his presence. I know that he is domineering over me; that he regards me as an inferior specimen of the Underworld; that he views me with contempt: and, in my rage and humiliation, I feel a hatred for this silent pursuer with the strong arm and the keen grey eyes. I wish that he were lying bound before me, and that I were permitted to taunt him, and to torture him, and to subject him to base humiliation and to pain. I wish that some one would kill him — not I (for I am not so depraved as to contemplate for even a moment the thought of taking human life) but some criminal less scrupulous than I.

I do not continue my walk along Canal Street. I turn down another street, walk half a block, and then slink into a doorway. I will be as sly as he.

I take up a position against the wall where, unobserved, I can just catch a glimpse of those passing along the sidewalk. In order that my presence in the hallway may not attract undue attention from the elevator man or the people passing in and out, I assume a lounging attitude, and light a cigarette at which I calmly puff.

Fifteen minutes pass. I go to the doorway and peer out, exhibiting as little of my head as possible in so doing. I see him standing upon the corner, puffing a cigar, and idly staring at some laborers who are digging a trench in the street. Returning to the hallway I wait five minutes longer before again venturing to peer forth.

He is gone. The laborers are working in the street with pick-axes and spades, and half a dozen men are standing close to the curb, watching them; but the Man in Brown has disappeared.

Good! Now to hasten to the office of Mr. Williams, where I shall be free from observation.



I decide to walk down to White Street, hurry along the latter for two or three blocks, then return to Canal Street and the office wherein I am employed. This plan I successfully carry out; and after fifteen or twenty minutes I enter the office, and sit down at my desk in the anteroom with a sigh of relief.

Thereafter I am more watchful as I walk along the streets. I scrutinize every man whom I meet, and keep a sharp lookout, especially for brown suits, of whatsoever shape or cut or fashion they may be. Soon I grow so unnerved at sight of that color that I cannot repress a start whenever I unexpectedly encounter any man wearing clothes of that shade. I find myself, one day, starting back in alarm upon turning a corner and finding myself unexpectedly confronted by a figure in brown which proves to be a dummy stationed in front of a clothing store.

"What's the matter, Sam?" inquires Mr. Williams one day. "You're not looking well."

"Oh, I'm all right," I answer hastily. "Dere's nothin' de matteh."

The mirror in my room, however, tells me that my face is paler than its wont; and I feel so nervous at times that I grow provoked at myself, and grit my teeth, and say to myself that this will never do, that I have done no wrong, and have nothing to fear, and that I am wearing myself out needlessly.

And so, in time, I conquer my weakness, and walk the streets with more assurance, and come to feel that I have been needlessly alarmed, and that I have nothing to dread. There comes a time when I say to myself: How foolish I have been! The Man in Brown may not have been following me after all. He may have been seeking the house whose doorway he entered. Perhaps he passed beyond it

before he realized that he had gone too far, and turned back just as I chanced to look around.

I have just about satisfied myself that I was needlessly worried, and have cast off the burden of my fears with feelings of profound relief, when who should walk into the office one day, as I sit at my desk reading a newspaper, but the Man in Brown!

His appearance is so unexpected; he opens the door so quickly, and enters the room so abruptly, that I am transfixed at sight of that formidable form. The hands holding the newspaper drop upon my knee; I hear the paper rustle as it falls to the floor; and there I sit, staring at him in terror, but momentarily unable to utter a sound.

"Boss in?" he inquires, gazing at me coolly.

I rouse myself with an effort, and nod my head in a mechanical way, scarcely realizing what I am doing. Without waiting to be announced, he strides into the main office, approaches the desk at which Mr. Williams is seated, and drops into a chair beside my employer.

I catch the low hum of conversation, but am unable to distinguish any of the words uttered.

As the minutes pass, I feel myself growing somewhat calmer. There was no look of recognition in his eyes when I passed him upon the street, nor did he give any evidence of recognizing me when he entered the office. Is it not probable that the change in my appearance, due to my neat attire and cleaner habits, has proved effective in concealing my identity even from his sharp eyes? Besides, assuming that he recognized me, what object could he have in consulting my employer unless it be sheer love of mischief, and the desire to humiliate me? I am not a fugitive from justice: I am no criminal: I am not sought by the police.— No; I am confident that the object of his visit has no bearing upon my employment in the office.

Five minutes pass — ten minutes — fifteen minutes. Then, from the office, comes a sharp, peremptory call.

"Gordin!" It is the voice of Mr. Williams.

"Yes, sir," I answer faintly, rising from my seat.

"Come here."

I enter the office and approach my employer. The Man in Brown is seated with his back turned toward me, and does not move as I draw near, nor does he turn his head to glance at me: only the eyes of Mr. Williams encounter mine as I approach the desk.

"Gordin, this man says that you are a criminal. What have you to say to that?"

"I ain't." My voice sounds strange and choked to me. The other clerks in the office have ceased work, and are gazing at me, and listening intently, for the room is not large, and Mr. Williams is speaking in ordinary tones, and makes no attempt to lower his voice in addressing me.

"You ain't, eh?" The Man in Brown turns in his chair, and smiles scornfully.

"You ain't, eh?" his lips appear to repeat beneath the heavy brown moustache which almost covers them.

"You ain't, eh?" his grey eyes snap at me.

"I ain't no criminal," I asseverate indignantly.

The smile dies out of the face of the Man in Brown, and he contracts his forehead in a frown. Resting his big hands upon his knees, he bends forward, and says sharply: "Then why the hell do you work with crooks if you're straight, eh?"

"I don'—"

"Stop lying, or it'll be the worse for you."

"I ain' lyin'," I murmur sullenly, resenting the humiliation to which I am being subjected in the presence of my fellow-employés, and realising how weak and defenceless



I am when arrayed against this big, confident, overbearing officer of the law.

“Do you know Red Bill?”

“Yes”—(I have dropped “yeh” since entering the office, and have learned to employ its more polished equivalent) —“but I don’ go wit’ him no more.”

“No more, eh? You must have broken off suddenly with him then, for a few weeks ago you two were as thick together as flies in summer. You’ve changed your name, too, I see. It used to be Smith, and now it’s Gordin. What was it before you became Smith, I wonder?”

I make no reply. There is something so tantalizing and cutting in his speech that I do not deign to answer him. Instead, I turn to Mr. Williams, and say unsteadily:

“I never wuz no crook, an’ I’m tryin’ te live decent —”

“Never was no crook, but you’re trying to reform anyhow: is that it?” sneers the Man in Brown. There is a snicker behind me. One of the clerks is laughing at the detective’s smartness and at my discomfiture. I feel the hot blood rush to my face, and appreciate more keenly than ever the futility of argument or pleading in the presence of the sharp, sarcastic individual who would distort every utterance of mine into an admission of guilt.

“It’s just as I said, Mr. Williams,” says my persecutor, laying his hand confidentially upon my employer’s knee; “he’s a crook from wayback, even though he ain’t as old as some of the old-timers. A fellow that goes with Red Bill and that kind of gun ain’t exactly the sort of man you’d trust in your office — now, is it? — You see he’s changed his name, too. The Lord only knows how many aliases he’s got; but a crook that changes his name every few weeks is got some object — ye see? And when he starts in as office boy, with a few dollars a week, you can bet



your bottom dollar he's got some bigger game in sight. Am I right?"

He lolls back in his chair, as he puts the query, with such a triumphant air, and appears so well satisfied with the force of his argument, and with the logic of his deductions, that no one, hearing him, could make any other answer than an emphatic "You are right, sir — you are right." It is obvious to me that Mr. Williams is vastly impressed by the air of confidence with which the detective marshals his arguments; and I see, in my mind's eyes, the clerks behind me nodding an involuntary assent as the Man in Brown confidently puts his query; and, in the short pause which ensues, it seems to me as though the query was reverberating through the room, and that the very air was echoing the words, and transposing them into the awaited reply of "You are right, sir — you are right."

"And now," says the Man in Brown, rising from his seat, and addressing Mr. Williams, "I guess I'd better be going. It's up to you to decide whether you want to keep a crook in your employ. Of course," with a wave of the hand, and a shrug of the shoulders, "if you want to take the risk of having a gun working for you when you know that the silk thieves have been working this district lately, you're welcome to do so. It ain't for me to advise you. You know your business better than I do, and if you think it's safe —"

He smiles sceptically, and takes a step forward.

"Just a minute!" says Mr. Williams, halting him; then, addressing me, my employer says in a low voice, with a touch of severity in its tones: "I'm sorry to learn of this, Gordin. I've been well satisfied with your work, and I'm sorry to hear this about you. Of course, you can't expect me to keep you any longer. I've got to have men

that I can trust — you understand that as well as I do. Even though a criminal means to reform, you can't expect a man to have the same confidence in him as in an employé who has no criminal record. I've got a lot of valuable silks in this place, as you know; and while I hope it's true that you're going to live an honest life, you can't blame me for being cautious. You're a sensible young man, and you'll make your way in the world if you keep straight; but, as for staying here, of course that's out of the question." He puts his hand in his pocket and counts out my wages for the week. "Here's your week's wages, Gordin," he adds, handing me the money. "I'm very sorry, but of course —"

"T'anks," I say, standing with lowered head before him. I yearn to speak — to express my indignant protest against these cruel charges — to shout a vehement denial — to proclaim my innocence in burning phrases — but my tongue is like lead.

Ah, were I but educated! Could I but speak! Had I but a knowledge of language, and powers of expression! How I curse my ignorance — my untutored mind which thinks, and feels, and yet cannot express itself, but struggles in darkness! Never before have I so keenly realized how I am hampered by lack of education; how ignorance shackles me and holds me in thralldom.

And, while strong emotions struggle for utterance, and my soul cries out within me, I say in a low voice "T'anks," though there is no thanks within my heart — only bitterness, and a sense of injustice and wrong. And then I murmur: "Et ain' true," and add helplessly, "but wot's de use?" and thus go forth in silence, closing the door behind me, and hating myself for submitting so quietly to this undeserved disgrace.

## CHAPTER IX

“ONCE A CROOK, ALWAYS A CROOK.” HOW I SLEEP UPON  
THE DOCKS. STARVATION OR CRIME

“Once a crook, always a crook,” is a famous remark attributed to Inspector Byrnes. It travels from mouth to mouth through the police force, is caught up by some reporter and flung into the printing press, and travels through the land so that men may add another pessimistic aphorism to their store of worldly learning.

“Once a crook, always a crook,” murmur the plain-clothes men sagely, as they follow the trail of the habitual criminal; and the bluecoats nod their heads in acquiescence, and impart the words of wisdom to the citizen upon the street who knows nothing about it but accepts deferentially the knowledge imparted by that despotic lord over the Underworld — His Plutonic Majesty, the Cop.

“Once a crook, always a crook,” murmurs the keen detective — he of the camera eyes.

“Once a crook, always a crook,” murmurs the majestic bluecoat.

And forthwith they proceed to demonstrate the truth of the aphorism by combining to force the offender against the laws to remain a crook forever thereafter.

And the end?

Camera Eyes vindicated. His Plutonic Majesty the Cop vindicated. “Once a crook, always a crook.” It was predicted. It came to pass. “I told you so.” Admiration of Citizen Who Knows Nothing About It greater than ever. General admiration. Clever police!



A first crime is always a tragedy. The man who, for the first time in his life, contemplates the commission of an act punishable by imprisonment, feels that the flames of hell are scorching him. A man does not plunge to death in the falls of Niagara without feelings of shuddering horror. A man unaccustomed to crime does not plunge into the black pool without feeling his soul shaken as he stands upon the brink.

The ignominy attaching to the act appals him: the fear of detection oppresses him constantly; and, in his racked soul, he feels the agony of battle as his better self wrestles with the demon in the dark.

Planning a crime:—expiating a crime. Two hells.

He commits the crime, is arrested, convicted and imprisoned. In the loneliness of his cell he balances the profit and the loss, and concludes that crime is not remunerative. He considers the suffering that his act has entailed upon himself and his family, and decides to sin no more. He has fallen, but he will rise again. He is beaten, but not crushed—overcome, but not conquered. He will go forth into the world a changed man, fling his past behind him, and begin life anew.

So he reasons. Foolish man!

He seeks employment within the domains of Respectability. He would defile the pure, seduce the godly, taint the undefiled. Crush the imp!

They trail the outcast to his lair, study his habits, follow him in his wanderings. Has he found employment? A word in the ear of his employer suffices. "Convict!" The man who has committed a crime is discharged.

Does he persevere in his efforts to reform? They are after him. They are the guardians of society. Let no man employ him, for he is a crook. "Once a crook, always a crook." Beware of him!



The end?

Oh, well, what other ending can there be? "Once a crook, always a crook": that is the end.

But I am determined not to end thus. I have decided to lead a decent life, and am determined to persevere notwithstanding the obstacles which I now encounter.

Again I wander the streets in search of employment, and find none. I give up my room in the hotel, and return to the parks and to the free-lunch counters. After walking the streets for nine days I secure employment in a hardware store. Three weeks later I pass the Man in Brown upon the street. On the following day my employer receives a visit from a policeman. That night I am discharged.

Another weary search for work, and again I find employment. Ten days later an officer visits my employer. At the end of the week I am discharged.

Night after night I sleep upon the benches in the public parks, or lie outstretched in the shadows of the friendly trees. The birds sing to me in the early morning, and, when night comes, the trees sway their branches above my head, and sigh softly in my ears, as though they understand my sorrows, and would comfort me with their soothing whispers. The hot summer sun beats down upon me as I walk the streets; the city glows like a furnace as the heat smites the pavements; I grow more and more reluctant to leave the shade of the trees in the morning. But I persevere in my search.

Within four months I am discharged from five positions. The reason given for my discharge is invariably the same: my employer has been informed that I am a criminal, and has concluded not to retain a criminal in his employ.

Soon I am reduced to such straits that I haunt the ferry entrances and carry luggage for visitors arriving in New

York. I stand at the entrance to the Pennsylvania ferry, on West Street, and greet the incomers, as they emerge from the ferryhouse, with: "Carry yer luggage? Carry yer valises fer ye? Carry yer packages?" About me stand porters and expressmen, accosting the throng and offering their services, and behind me are a dozen cab-drivers shouting in hoarse accents: "Cab!" "Kep!" "Keb!" "Cap!"

Sometimes, on hot nights, I sleep on the docks. Once a rat bites me and wakes me from my slumber: on another occasion a human dock rat, crazy for a nickel wherewith to buy a drink, pounces upon me in the darkness, and I wake just in time to turn aside a descending knife-blade and to thrash my assailant.

Many of the docks are private property, and are guarded by watchmen who refuse to admit any person after nightfall; so I seek the public piers, passing my nights on the water's edge at the foot of Dover Street, or on the Market Street pier, with the East River flowing beneath me; or I wander along the river front on the West Side of the city, and finally seek rest upon the pier at the foot of King Street.

When the summer breathes upon the tenements, and Lower New York, gasping for breath, feels that the lid of hell has been raised so that the weak and the sickly may burn up and die, the wharfs begin to hum with the coming of night, and the hollow-cheeked mothers wend their way wearily to the water front, holding their fretful babes in their arms. Accompanying them are the fathers, puffing at their clay pipes, sometimes carrying a box for the family to sit upon, or holding a tin can which will soon be filled with beer.

Then the men lie down upon the string-piece (the heavy raised beams along the edges of the pier) and go to sleep;

and sometimes, in their slumber, they roll off into the water, six feet below, and come up wide-awake, sputtering and dripping; and sometimes (but rarely) they roll off, and never come up at all.

Now do the little girls of the tenements play the games which have been played in palace and hovel, in royal park and in dark, damp cellar, since the world began, chasing each other, tagging each other, and dancing as gaily as though the rough wooden beams were the green sward of some ancient park, and the thick string-piece bordering the pier were the fringe of trees surrounding some sunny glade, and the dark buildings looming up in the distance were some purple mountains rising far away above the treetops. Hide-and-seek they play, and blindman's buff, and "keeping-house," and all the charming baby games which Eve taught her little babes while the vision of Paradise was still fresh in her mind, and the gates of Paradise were still close to her heart. And their fresh young voices rise in "London Bridges Falling Down" and "Ring Around A Rosy" and other songs which their great grandmothers sang in the long ago, when the fairies lived, and peeped into children's eyes — as they still do to-day, thank God for that!

Night on the wharfs. I am lying down upon the string-piece, and two men snoring in slumber are lying near me.

It is long past one o'clock, and we three alone remain. The policeman, who has been with us earlier in the evening, has gone upon his rounds. Now and then a ferryboat, dotted with lights, crosses the river, or some schooner displays its red and green lanterns as it sails past in the darkness.

I fall asleep, and wake to find two men rifling the pockets of my companions, and a third figure (a young boy, judg-



ing from his size) approaching me. I lie still, deeming it best not to move lest I be plunged into the river beneath me before I succeed in rising to my feet. I feel a slender hand cautiously inserted in my pocket, and know that the thirty cents therein have been abstracted by a young pickpocket who has learned his trade well.

But one of the sleepers, aroused by the movements of one of the older rogues, starts up crying: "What do ye want?" and, as he does so, the wharf-rat at his side gives him a shove that sends him plunging over the edge of the pier into the black waters.

"Help!" I shout, leaping to my feet, and striking out with my right arm.

At the cry, the three villains take to their heels, and scurry off; and my companion and I peer over the edge of the wharf, and call out to the man in the water, but no voice answers us. And he never reappears.

On another night, as I walk along West Street, I hear a cry for help, and perceive, half a block ahead, a young woman struggling, in the grasp of two men.

"Perlice!" I shout at the top of my voice; and the shout startles the men, and they hurry off to the shelter of the black wharfs, where they hide with the rats who infest the river front.

"Oh, Gawd!" gasps the woman hysterically, and, without a word to me, she runs away to where the lights burn in the side streets, and enters a saloon upon the corner.

After some weeks I tire of the wharfs, and yearn to obtain steady employment once again, so that I may maintain my self-respect, and sleep in comfort upon a bed, within the four walls of a room.

Again the futile search for work, the weary walk along the hot streets in the heat of the day, the hopeful mornings when I begin my search, and the hopeless nights when the



parks are my sleeping-place, and my empty stomach cries in vain for food.

What now? What now? — There is no work for me in this big city: no hand is stretched forth to help me in my efforts to become a man and fight a man's battle for his daily bread and a roof to shelter him. What now? Where shall I turn? What shall I do? I want to live, and I cannot live on nothing. My arms are strong, my heart is willing, yet I am forced to live in idleness, and to starve like a hungry dog.

I feel that there is something wrong with the world. I brood over the injustice of my lot. I begin to grow morbid, to hate my fellow-men, to feel myself an outcast, beyond the pale of human sympathies.

It is evident that, in all this world, not another soul is interested in my struggles. Not another soul cares whether I succeed or fail, whether I live or die, whether I eat or starve, whether I live an honest life or become a thief. These people who pass me upon the streets — you, and your friends, and your neighbours — give no thought to me, or question themselves as to who this youth may be, sauntering along the sidewalks so aimlessly.

“If you only knew!” my heart cries again and again. “If you only knew, you would give me a chance!” But they do not know. They will never know. They live in their world, and I live in mine, and no message passes between our souls.

“Once a crook, always a crook.” Is it true? Am I doomed to sink lower and lower despite my struggle to rise? Am I to be forced to choose between starvation and crime because of man's inhumanity? Is the gate of opportunity to be barred forever though I pound desperately upon it with my bruised fists, and shout aloud in a voice which no one heeds?

I am without work and without money. I am tired out, discouraged, desperate. I am without food. I am starving.

On one side crime: on the other starvation. Which should I choose?

## CHAPTER X

WHEREIN ARE DESCRIBED THE PAWNSHOP OF MR. SAMUELS,  
THE WONDERFUL JUMPING JACK, AND MY EXPERIENCE  
IN SEARCH OF WORK

I am walking along Hester Street. It is three o'clock in the afternoon; and I have eaten no morsel since the evening of the preceding day, when I stole two bananas from a fruit stand, and devoured them while the proprietor's back was turned. It was my first theft, and I felt no compunction. But, though I have been hungry all day, I have not yielded to the temptation to satisfy my appetite at another fruit stand. Now, however, the day is passing, and hunger is again overpowering me. I have decided to steal another meal.

I am starving, and there is food within reach. It is not costly food, and its loss would probably not be felt by the owner of the stand. I cannot live without food. My life is of more value than the fruit which tempts me; hence, I am justified in stealing the food in order to preserve my life.

Thus I reasoned yesterday, and stole the bananas without feeling the slightest qualm of conscience. When night came, I curled myself up at the end of a dock, and went to sleep in the early evening, so that I might not feel hungry again before the next day.

Thus I reason again to-day. This morning I determined to resist the temptation to steal my breakfast, and all day I have gone without food. Now, however, I feel that the time has arrived when I must eat; and I have

entered Hester Street with the determination to satisfy my hunger.

As I walk along the sidewalk, weak and despondent, my eye is attracted by a sheet of paper pasted upon the window of a pawnbroker's shop; and, as I draw near, I read the words scrawled thereon in straggling capital letters:

CLERK WANTED  
INQUIRE WITHIN

There are numerous articles of personal adornment displayed in the window — brooches, and rings, and pendants, and a battered telescope with a tag thereon, and half a dozen packs of playing-cards. There are some fire-arms also displayed — six or seven tarnished revolvers, a rusty sword protruding from a leathern scabbard, a box of bullets resting upon the ivory handle of a stained sword — and on a shelf are five Bibles with torn bindings, and a Hebrew prayer book.

The dust lies thick upon the shelves and upon their contents. It clings to a dozen cups and saucers, and obscures the red and blue lines which encircle them. It rests upon a silver candle-stick, and upon a gold-chased winecup whose glory has been dimmed. It lies upon a silver-backed mirror which once adorned the dresser of some woman's boudoir, and it powders the face of an ivory maiden who bears a tiny basket of ivory fruit upon her arms. There is a blue china cat on one side of the window, and a red china dog on the opposite side; and, though the cat regards her companion with meek and complacent eyes of dusty blue, the dog glares at her as ferociously as it is possible for a red dog to glare when his eyes are full of dust, and his ears are nicked, and one of his legs



has apparently been lost in some lamentable encounter with a bigger canine.

There is a green plush curtain to the rear of the window which conceals the interior of the shop from the view of pedestrians. Three golden balls are suspended by iron rods above the store, and extend outward almost halfway across the sidewalk. As I draw back from the window and glance upward, I perceive that the upper portion of the pane contains the inscription, in letters of gold:

### JACOB SAMUELS

### PAWNBROKER

I have no expectation of securing employment. I have met with so many disappointments that I have abandoned all hope of obtaining work. I hesitate between an inclination to make a perfunctory inquiry within the store and a desire to first satisfy my hunger at a fruit stand on the corner. I realize, however, that if I appropriate some of the fruit it may become necessary for me to take to flight if I would avoid capture, in which event it would be foolhardy for me subsequently to return to the scene of hostilities in order to enter the pawnshop; so I determine to make my usual inquiry, and, if rebuffed, carry out my plan to steal my meal, and escape.

The entrance is by way of a narrow door squeezed in between the window and the wall of the house; and this door I open, and enter the shop. I find myself in a room about forty feet long and eighteen feet wide, with two flutes, and a cornet, and several harmonicas and other musical instruments suspended from the ceiling, and a big jumping'jack dangling above a counter which extends from the window halfway down the length of the room. There are glass cases upon the counter, and in them are

displayed divers articles of jewelry; and there is a big glass case against the wall behind the counter, extending from floor to ceiling, and filled with platters, and paintings, and musical instruments, and a heterogeneous collection of discarded household effects and abandoned heirlooms. There is a safe in the rear of the establishment; and beside the safe there is a rolltop desk at which a young man of twenty or twenty-one is seated, making some entries in a book.

A man and a woman are standing in front of the counter as I enter, and the man is disputing the value which an old man with grey beard has placed upon a diamond ring that he holds in his hand.

The old man has bright grey eyes shadowed by heavy grey eyebrows. His dark face is deeply seamed. His moustache and beard were black once, but are now grey, as is also his hair. His head is surmounted by a little skull cap; and he wears a black alpaca coat and waistcoat, and black trousers, but neither collar nor tie.

He is gesticulating violently with his right hand as I enter, and appears to be engaged in heated controversy with the owner of the ring — a big, broad, heavy-jowled individual with fierce, black moustache, and a dissipated countenance.

“Don’ che tell me vot di’mon’s is wort’!” cries the old gentleman with some heat. “I fo’got more von di’mon’s den you efer *gelernt*. Mybe you knows about *soufen* un’ *fressen* (drinking and eating to excess) but von di’mon’s —!” A disdainful wave of the hand completes the sentence.

“Don’t give me any of your Jew talk,” says the man with the black moustache; and, at the words, it seems to me that the old man’s eyes flame for just a moment as he raises his eyes to the speaker’s face ere dropping them to

renew his scrutiny of the stone. "I know what the ring cost me, and what it's worth, and if I hadn't played the races yesterday, you can bet your sweet life that you'd never see that stone inside a pawnshop."

"So you blayed de races un' bet de wrong horse on?" laughs Mr. Samuels, with just a touch of scorn in his voice. "Nex' time mybe you know betteh."

"That ring's worth three hundred dollars if it's worth a cent," says the big man, impatiently. "Let me have two hundred on it and the stone's yours."

"Two hunderd? Is de *mensch meshuggah* (fellow crazy)?" queries the pawnbroker, raising his eyes, and appealing to the jumping jack which dangles from the ceiling. "Two hunderd?" Then, in indignant tones, he cries: "Vot you t'ink? I got money to burn dat I t'row it away like dat? I voik hard un' don' blay de horses like a sport —"

"Oh!" cries the big man in disgust, "stop chewin' a rag, will you? and get down to business. I want two hundred —"

"Too much! Too much! De ring ain' wort' it. It's a yellor di'mond."

"Yellow?" shouts the heavy-jowled individual fiercely. "You lie, damn you! It's a pure white stone, that is — as good as any in your place."

"V'ite? A v'ite stone? You van' te tell te me vat et is a v'ite stone? Look at et!" raising it in his fingers so that it sparkles in the light — "yellor like a lemon un' he calls et v'ite. I gif ye von hunderd un' fifty dollars un' not a cent more."

"What the —!" burst forth from the big man explosively; but the old man with the bright grey eyes shrugs his shoulders indifferently, and calmly repeats "Von hunderd un' fifty dollars," as though the transaction



were consummated, and adds: "Make oudt de ticket, Chack."

The youth addressed as Jack scribbles some memorandum upon a pawnticket, and hands the latter to his employer.

"I won't take it," cries the big man indignantly. "Make it a hundred and seventy-five."

"Von hunderd un' fifty, un' not a cent more," repeats the pawnbroker imperturbably, "un' I lose money on dat, mybe."

"Maybe the hell!" grunts the other, as the old man draws forth some bills from a drawer of the safe. "I'd like to see the day when you lose money, I would. You'd skin a man alive, you would, to make a dollar."

Over the face of the old man flashes a look of disdain. His lips curl; his expressive grey eyes are turned upon his customer contemptuously; and then he smiles like one resigned to hear the taunts of others, and says with dignity: "Mybe you're right — mybe you're right. Here's your money."

The heavy-jowled individual counts his money, places it in a wallet, and takes his departure; and then I perceive that the woman at the counter is not alone, but that a little, sleeping child is clasped in her arms.

She has a pale, thin face, and colorless lips, and eyes of a washed-out blue; and she presents a pathetic figure as she stands forlorn at the counter, holding the child in one arm, and resting the faded black sleeve of her other arm upon the glass case.

"Vell?"

"I want to pawn this. How much will you give on this?" As she speaks, she opens the hand resting upon the glass case, and holds up to view a locket which had been clasped in her fingers. Mr. Samuels takes it from



her, and examines it critically ere returning it to her with a gesture of disparagement.

"Two dollahs. It ain' voit more."

"Two dollars? Is that all?" There is such dismay in her voice that the pawnbroker strokes his grey beard nervously, and peers at her uneasily as he shrugs his shoulders.

"Is dat all?" he repeats irritably. "Sure dat's all. Vot you t'ink? I gif you more vot idt's voit?"

"No," says the woman with a weary gesture. "Of course I can't expect you to give me what it's worth; but I can't let it go for that. It's — it's —"

A sob breaks from her. She turns dejectedly from the counter, and wends her way toward the door.

"Here, you!" shouts the old man, irritably. "Vot you cryin' about? — Vell? Say it? Vot?"

Receiving no reply save a sob, he rushes from behind the counter to the door, plants himself against the latter, and, confronting the woman who has halted indecisively, proceeds to address her with mingled indignation and reproach.

"Dat's a nice adve'tisement!" he begins, shaking his fists in her face. "Dat's a nice adve'tisement! Leafin' a pawnshop un' cryin'. Such a bizness! You van's de peoples t'ink I'm a t'ief, or a robber, or somedings else vot you call it? Vot I done you? Fo' v'y you wan's to ruin my bizness, heh? Goin' out cryin', heh? Such a adve'tisement in de street! Shame mit you! Git back to de counteh un' talk bizness, you *resheinde* (wicked one) you! Git back dere!"

His manner is so excited, and his actions so peculiar, that the woman is quite taken aback; and returns to the counter in great alarm lest he do her bodily harm if she disobey. And, indeed, his voice is so irritable and threat-

ening that I do not blame her for being fearful. Nor does his manner, when he resumes his stand behind the counter, tend to allay her fears, for he looks at her so grimly from beneath his heavy grey eyebrows that she trembles as she clasps the child closer to her breast. The movement rouses the little one, and he opens his eyes sleepily, and begins to cry.

“*Gott im Himmel* (God in heaven)!” cries Mr. Samuels, as the wail of the infant salutes his ears; “anoddeh cryer! — Here you, stop it! Stop it! Like de mudder exac’ly, on’y wise! A nice *mishpochah* (family)! *Oi veh! Oi veh!*”

He puts his hands to his ears, and gazes at the mother and child with such a droll expression upon his face that I begin to wonder how much of his indignation is real, and how much is assumed; and, even as I put the question to myself, he suddenly seizes a long cord which dangles from between the legs of the big jumping jack, and proceeds to exhibit the wonderful agility of the latter.

“Oho, liddle baby, fo’ v’y you cry? Look at funny Mr. Chumpin’ Chack. Up goes his arms — up goes his legs — down un’ up — Such a fine von! — Such a nice von! — Oho! Look him on! Ain’ he de dandy von a chumpin’ chack! Vot you t’ink?”

And, indeed, it is a sight to behold the evolutions of the big wooden figure suspended from the ceiling. A high green hat, and a yellow face with black dots to represent eyes and nose and mouth, and a bright red coat, and blue legs terminating in orange shoes so highly polished that they outshine any polished orange shoes ever worn by jumping jacks before. The legs go up, and the legs drop down; and Mr. Samuels jerks the cord, and comments upon the antics of the wooden figure, until the baby ceases to

whimper, and gazes in rapt wonder at the marvellous toy.

"Such a bizness on a hot day!" gasps the old man, mopping his forehead, as he finally desists from his efforts. "Vot you t'ink, I'm *meshuggah* (crazy), dat you makes a fool oudt o' me in weddeh like dis? You cry-babies 'vot you are, him un' you! Vot you want for dat locket, anyway?"

"I thought that perhaps — perhaps — you would let me have four or five dollars," stammers the woman. "I've got rent to pay, and my husband is sick and out of work, and — and —"

Again the blue eyes fill with tears, and the colorless lips tremble, and a sob breaks from her as she gazes imploringly at the little man behind the counter.

"Here you!" he shouts roughly. "Cryin' again? You got a reg'lar tear-fact'ry in dat *ponim* (face) o' yours. If you don' shut up dat fountain in dat *nebbish ponim* o' yours I don' gif you a nickel fer a million secon' han' lockets vot you got. *Sh'ma Yisroel!* (Hear O Israel)!" as the baby begins to whimper, "de odde' one's at et now! De liddle fountain's startin' up! — Hey you! Hey you! Shut up!"

He paws the air wildly with his hand, and makes a dive for the cord which dangles from the body of the jumping jack. Once more the wooden legs pirouette, and the red arms move up and down, and the perspiration gathers upon the old gentleman's forehead, as he tugs madly at the cord.

"Look de man on! Look him on! — Such a bizness! *Ach Gott!* such a bizness on a hot day! Ain't he a nice chack, vot? Ain't he a funny? Oho, vot a funny man! Look his arms on, un' his legs! Such a funny man! Such a bizness! Ain't you de nice baby? Such a goot



boy! Laff, you fountain! Laff, you sour-face! Such a goot baby! Vot a funny chumpin'-chack! Look him on! Ho, ho, ho!"

The child yields to the fascination of the acrobatic figure in the air, and coos in delight. At the sound, the old gentleman's face softens, and a smile hovers upon his lips.

"Vell, you ain' such a bad one afte' all!" he says, relinquishing his hold upon the cord to mop his face; then, bending forward, he addresses the mother with paternal interest, and inquires: "How old is de baby?"

"Four months," she says, gazing down tenderly at the child.

"Smaht boy. Ven he wan's a t'ing he knows how to get et. He'd be all right w'en he didn' got such a river in his head. How much rent you got to pay?"

"Eight dollars — but I've saved four."

"Wot's de matter mit your husband. Drink?"

"Oh, no," says the woman, with a touch of dignity in her manner; "Jim doesn't drink, except a glass now and then; but his cough bothers him, and he's lost so much weight that he's grown kinder weak."

Mr. Samuels holds the locket in his hand and gazes at it fixedly. He stands there so long staring at it that I wonder whether he is really scrutinizing it for the purpose of appraising its value, or whether he is pondering upon the woman's words. Suddenly he raises it to his eyes, and gazes at a tiny white stone (so small that it is scarcely noticeable) set in the centre of the locket.

"*Sh'ma Yisroel!* it's a di'mon'!" he exclaims, as though he has made a startling discovery (though I am sure that he saw the tiny chip as soon as the locket was offered to him); "it's a real di'mon'! W'y you didn' tole me before dat it wuz a di'mon' locket?"

He appears to attach such importance to the presence



of the gem, and such value to the tiny stone, that the woman gazes at him expectantly, as though awaiting some miracle of which she had not dreamed.

"I—I—didn't know the stone was valuable," she falters. "It's such a little stone—"

"Liddle stone," he repeats scornfully—"liddle stone. Vot dat's got te do wit' de value? You t'ink I buy di'mon's by de ton? Et's de quality—de quality—wot counts. Now look at dat stone!—" holding it out at arm's length, and speaking in tones of admiration—"look at de quality vot it got! A real v'ite stone, mit such a pureness! Chust look at it! Ain't et a beauty?"

He gazes at it as though ravished, while the pale young mother hangs upon his words as though scarcely believing the evidence of her senses.

"How much you vant on dat di'mon' locket?" he queries, as though questioning her for the first time.

"I thought perhaps five or six dollars—"

"Fife or six dollars?" He raises his arms in eloquent disdain. "A lot you know about di'mon's. Fife or six dollars? V'y, you got chus' so much sense like de rest o' de *goyim* (Gentiles). De on'y diff'ence you know between di'mon's un' pigs' feet is dat you wear one un' you eat de odder. Fife or six dollars? V'y, dat di'mon's wort' fifteen dollahs if it's wort' a cent. I'll loan ye ten dollahs on it. D'ye want et?"

Her face turns pink and then grows pale, and her eyes light up, and her lips smile, and her face looks less worn than it did a moment ago, as she says quickly: "Oh, yes, indeed. I didn't know Jim paid so much for it when—"

"Chim! A lot Chim knows about stones," mutters Mr. Samuels irritably, as he takes ten dollars from the safe and hands it to the woman.

"Thank you," she says, heaving a deep sigh of relief as

she starts for the door; and "Thank you," she repeats, as she stands upon the threshold, with her child in her arms. Then the door closes upon her, and Mr. Samuels, with a look of profound disgust upon his face, flings the locket into a drawer, and vents his wrath upon the young man whom he has addressed as Chack.

"Such a bizness!" he growls. "Ten dollars t'rowed away — right in de street. De whole t'ing ain't wort' no t'ree dollars. Un' you, Chack — you, like a *schlemihl*, let me t'row away ten dollars midout winkin'. Wot kind o' bizness is dat, I like to know?"

"Well, why did you do it?" queries the young man.

"V'y? Because I'm a damn fool, dat's v'y. Vot you want of me? I should let her be t'rowed out v'en her husband's sick? Vot you t'ink I am, you *schnorrer* (beggar)!"

"You're too easy," says Jack. "You can't believe them when they cry. They all cry with you because they know you're easy."

"Easy?" says the old man; "vell, mybe I am, *aber* mybe not. It all debends. Mybe I make et up on de sports vot de races blay."

"It ain't business," persists the young man named Jack.

"Bizness? You know so much about bizness like dat chumpin' chack. It ain't bizness to pull de heart out von poor *schlemihlim*. Anyhow, a woman's tears is a bad adve'tisement fer a man. It don' neveh bring no customers, un' et don' make ye feel pertic'lar goot on *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement)."

The allusion to the day of fasting, whereon the Jew lays bare his heart in the synagogue and seeks forgiveness for his sins, stirs within me faint recollections of scenes witnessed by me in childhood — the crowded synagogue, the men in their white praying-shawls, the balcony where the

women sat throughout the day, the voice of the cantor intoning the confession of sins, and the congregation beating their breasts and wailing "*Oshamnu* (We have sinned)!" I do not know whether it is my youth that renders him careless of speech in my presence, or whether it is absent-mindedness; but, whatever the reason may be, he does not appear to be mindful of my presence until I have approached the counter and stand there, waiting expectantly for him to notice me. Then he turns his bright grey eyes upon me, and raises his heavy eyebrows, and peers at me sharply as though spying prey, and says impatiently: "Vell?"

"I'm lookin' fer a job," I murmur mechanically, and, after my fruitless search for work, I feel as though I might, with equal hope of success, be looking for a diamond, or for some equally unattainable thing. "Are ye got anything fer a feller?"

"Sure," he answers promptly; "I got a fine job fer ye. Pull dis chumpin' chack un' make him chump." And, at the words, he tugs at the cord which dangles from the figure until the blue legs go up, and the blue legs drop down, and the red arms go up, and the red arms drop down, and the high green hat and yellow face of the toy sway overhead.

The grin which overspreads his countenance, and the derisive accents of his voice, are so irritating to me, that it requires only the chuckle of amusement from the youth named Jack to make me tremble with indignation. They are laughing at me — the swarthy little man who plays with jumping jacks and amuses himself at my expense, and the smiling, fair-haired youth at the desk who turns his light grey eyes upon me, and whose expression reminds me of a cat as his glance embraces me — they are laughing at me as though I were some eccentric plaything created for

their diversion. And, as I stand there, faint with hunger and trembling with indignation, I hear the old man say jeeringly: "I s'bose you're a honest boy vot's got hard luck un' is lookin' fer a easy chob mit goot vaches un' no voik. I guess I knows your kind."

The insolence of his speech, and especially of his manner, are unendurable. I stare at him a moment angrily, then turn, without a word, toward the door; but the injustice of his words is so galling that even in my weakened state I cannot refrain from retorting to his insults, so, halfway across the floor I halt, turn upon him, and, in bitter words of indignation, give vent to my feelings.

"No," I cry, "I'm no honest boy. I'm a crook — d'ye understan'? — a crook. I've been in de pen fer bein' a hobo. I've gone wit' crooks. I've tried te reform but ye won' let me — you an' de likes o' yez. I've been starvin' tryin' te git woik. Ye won' gimme none. Ye kin laff all ye wan's — damn yez! — but ye're wise crooks dan I am — all o' yez — dat drives a man te de devil an' den makes fun o' him. I hooked a couple o' b'nanas yesteday 'cause I didn' have no grub te eat all day, an' now I'm goin' te hook some more, an' ye kin go te hell wit' yer jumpin' jack, damn yez! — damn yez!"



## CHAPTER XI

WHICH RELATES HOW MR. SAMUELS PROCEEDS TO FEED ME  
AND TO OFFER ME A POSITION

I reach the door and fumble for the knob. I am so wrought up, and I feel so weak after my outburst, that I cannot readily locate the object of my search. The door seems blurred, and my hands are trembling, and there is a voice behind me (to which I pay no attention) urging me to wait and not to be in such a hurry; but I fumble with my hands until they finally encounter the doorknob, and I am about to turn it when I feel myself drawn gently backward, and become aware of the fact that the skull cap is close to my eyes, and that the old gentleman has hold of my arm and is calling upon Jack to bring a chair, and that I am leaning against the wall for support.

"Bring a chair right away quick!" shouts Mr. Samuels, "un' be quick aboutt it too! Hurry up dere!"

"I'm coming."

"A *mesa meshunnah* (unnatural death) on you mit' yer comin'! Hurry up un' come mit' yer comin'!" cries the old man, and, as Jack brings the chair to me, I drop into it, feeling very strange and feeble.

"Do somedin'!" shouts the pawnbroker to him. "Ain' you got no *sechel* (sense) in your head dat you stan' dere like a *schlemihl* midoudt no brains? Start somedin'! Do somedin'! Git lunch nex' door — coffee, un' rolls, un' *kuchen* (cake), un' anyt'ing vot dey got. You shackass you, do somedin'!" And, as Jack hurries forth on his errand, Mr. Samuels grasps a newspaper from the coun-

ter, and proceeds to fan me vigorously, apostrophising me in the meantime, and occasionally interrupting his efforts to cool me by shaking his head and his fist at me in the most extraordinary manner.

“A fine bizness dis is! Foist a woman mit a *schlemihl* von a husband un’ a fountain in her head, den right away next a feller mit’ noddings t’ eat, un’ a tongue he gives a man like he wuz *meshuggah* (crazy). *Oi veh!* vot a fine bizness is a pawnbroker! Un’ den mit your talk like a *goy* (Gentile) — mit yer damn et, un’ damn yez, un’ crooks, un such a kind o’ fine talk. Ye ought t’ be ashame of yeself. Ye talk like a crook, ye do. Ye t’ink a broker got no feelings mit yer damn et, un’ damn et, un’ some more damn et? — Now don’ talk — don’ talk ” (as I turn my head towards the door); “chus’ have a quiet on till Chack comes mit de eats. Dat Chack he do noddings right away on de quick. All de time he gif me a back talk ven I tole him somedings to do. He ought to be back already long ago, but as soon as he does somet’in quick et gits slow right away. He’s chus’ de man vot you vant in bizness ven you got no use fer ’im.”

He fans me so vigorously that the perspiration trickles down his forehead, and into his eyes, and across the bridge of his nose. I feebly protest against his exertions, and assure him that I’m all right, and that it is unnecessary to fan me, and that I’m quite cool; but my protests are received with such impatience, and excite the newspaper in his hand to such extraordinary activity, that I finally desist, and resign myself to await the appearance of Jack with the meal which Mr. Samuels has ordered.

“You’re cool, vot? A nice coolness you got on a hot day mit noddings in de stummick. Un’ you feel all right, vot? Such *shkorim* (lies)! Vere you learn dem lies? Be quiet! Don’ talk! Chus’ listen to my *schmoos* (non-

sense) un' keep your mout' shut. Dat Chack ain' back yet. He t'inks you kin fast fer a year—vot he cares about et? I bet dot on *Yom Kippur* dat *Judische goy* fill his stummick till he busts: vot he cares uf you got someding, uf you aindt. A *chazor* (pig) is a *chazor* we say."

Thus he babbles on, as though hoping that his loquacity will serve to stave off the pangs of hunger until Jack shall appear with the eagerly awaited meal; and in the meantime he refuses to desist from his manipulations of the improvised fan except for the brief intervals consumed in mopping his forehead and in plaintively assuring me that it is hot. He breathes so hard, and perspires so freely, and seems so exhausted with his exertion, that I make several attempts to rise from my chair, and do my utmost to impress him with the fact that it is unnecessary to treat me as an invalid, and that I am quite strong and healthy; but he persists in regarding me as one whose physical condition requires the utmost care and attention, and stubbornly refuses to permit me to leave my chair, or to fan myself without his assistance.

But finally the belated appearance of Jack relieves the situation. He enters the store with a tray in his hand laden with steaming coffee, and with rolls, and bread, and cakes, and butter, and jelly, and with a glass of ice-water at one end of the tray, and a plate of cheese-cake at the other end, and he deposits his burden upon a low stool which is dragged forth from behind the counter and pressed into service as a table.

And I eat—Oh, but I eat with relish! Never did a meal taste better. Never was there coffee better flavored, or rolls better baked, or bread and butter more agreeably combined, or jelly more inviting, or cakes more delicious. And I eat and I eat, until there is nothing more left to eat



upon the tray, while Mr. Samuels watches me with a smile of satisfaction upon his face, nodding his head, and chuckling, and muttering "Goot!" at intervals to express his satisfaction at the rapidity with which the food disappears from the tray.

Jack's interest in my gastronomical achievement is not so keen as his master's. Having performed his duty in conveying the laden tray from the restaurant upon the adjoining premises to the stool which has been placed in front of me, he feels that he is entitled to relax from the strain imposed upon him by these arduous labors, and he proceeds to do this by drawing a cigarette from his pocket, lighting it, and gazing out of the door at the passers-by without paying any further attention to me. But this attitude of indifference does not appeal to the old gentleman, to whom the spectacle I present as I devour the food which my stomach craves appears so inspiring that he cannot understand how it is possible for any other mortal to refrain from participating in the pleasure which he derives from the sight.

"You vant some more?" he queries, as I put down my empty cup and devour the last bit of cake upon the tray.

"Oh, no. I'm so stuffed dat I couldn' eat anodder bite."

"You gotta eat some more. Chack, go nex' door un' ask for de same t'ings over again."

But I protest that my stomach is full, and that I could not swallow another mouthful: and finally he gives way, and puts the tray upon the counter, and seats himself upon the stool in front of me.

"You a *Jehudah* (Jew)?" he queries, peering into my face, and evidently detecting some trace of the race in my features.

"Yes."



"I s'pose you lif like a *goy* (Gentile) dough?"

I think of my life on the road, cut off from my people, and from every religious observance of my faith, and I nod my head. Into his eyes creeps a look of sadness, and he draws his grey eyebrows together, and sighs softly.

"Oh, well, I s'bose you had putty hard times, un' mybe couldn' help et much; *aber* here in America is a bad place to keep Chewish —"

A sniff from the figure at the door makes him pause. He turns his head slowly, and gazes with evident annoyance at the form of Jack, whose back is turned toward him, and who is puffing away at the cigarette in his mouth.

"Chack, vot for you make such a noise?"

Jack turns, with a languid air of surprise, and says: "I don't know what you mean. I wasn't making any noise."

"Don' you tell me no lies needer!" cries Mr. Samuels, raising his finger warningly. Then, turning to me, he says, as if in explanation of his annoyance: "Alvus he make such a noise ven I tell him he got no Chewish heart in him. Look at him! Look at dat sample of a' American Chew mit a cigarette in his mout', un' de spit on de floor, un' lookin' out o' de winder at de petticoats in de street! His fahder *olov hasholom!* ah, he wuz a man; *aber* dat boy dere —"

"Oh, give us a rest!" interjects the youth at the door. "I've heard that often enough. What the hell do I care?"

"You hear him? You hear that *roshe* (wicked one) cursin'? Alvus he goes on like dat. He hang ye such a mout' on v'en ye talk to him good voids dat you feel nex' time like you shut up before you start."

He shrugs his shoulders, and raises both hands with a gesture of despair; then, dismissing the subject of his employé's derelictions from further consideration, he fixes his

bright grey eyes upon me and says: "Vell, vot about you? Vot kind of a bum you been, 'un v'y?"

I tell him that I have been a wanderer for many years, and that I wish to settle down to a different mode of existence, and that I have been searching vainly for employment.

"V'y you don' go home to your folks un' live like a *Jehudah* instead of bein' a bum?"

I tell him that I have no home and no relatives, and that my parents died when I was a young child, and that I have had no home since my mother's death. He gazes at me with those grey eyes of his peering forth from beneath his shaggy eyebrows, and strokes his beard thoughtfully, and I feel that he is deliberating upon my words, and is asking himself whether I am speaking the truth, or am lying to him in order to gain his sympathy.

"You said before you wuz a crook. Tell me v'y you wuz a crook un' vot you done."

"I didn' mean dat I wuz a crook —"

"You said et." There is a note of anger and suspicion in his voice as I contradict my previous assertion.

"I said it because I wuz mad w'en yez made fun o' me 'cause I wuz lookin' fer a job. I ain' been no crook, but I got in wit' crooks w'en I hit de road, an' I wuz pinched fer stealin' a ride —"

"Pinched? Vot kind o' funny talk is dat?"

"I got copped —" I explain apologetically.

"Copped? Pinched — copped — Vot kind of a talk you lettin' loose anyway?"

"He means he was arrested and locked up," says Jack, for the first time evincing some interest in my personality.

"Oho! So you know dat kind o' crook talk, too?" And, with a sad shake of the head, the old gentleman adds

reprovingly: "Your fahder, *olov hasholom*, he didn't know vot pinched un' copped vuz, like his son."

"Oh, well," says the son, throwing away the stump of a cigarette and drawing forth a fresh one; "he wasn't no American."

"No, un' he vuzen' no *goy* needer, like his son." Then, turning to me, he says: "I don' vant no lyin' bizness. I vant de trut'. Sometimes et hoits to tell de trut'; but in de end et hoits yet more v'en ye lie. Mybe I helps ye, mybe I don'; but don' tell me ye vuzen' no crook uf ye vuz."

"I ain' lyin'," I maintain stoutly. "I've gone wit' crooks; but I ain' no crook, an' I don' wan' te be none." And then I add earnestly: "D'ye t'ink I'd be starvin' lookin' fer woik if I wanted te be crooked?"

The grey eyes soften, and the bearded face grows gentle, and the hands which rest upon his knees tremble a little. He clears his throat, and murmurs faintly: "Vell —" and then he pauses to cough, and to stroke his beard meditatively, and to take off his skull cap and put it on again, and to mop his brow vigorously, and to wipe the corners of his eyes into which the perspiration appears to have trickled from his eyebrows.

"Vell —" he repeats, clearing his throat, and then he turns indecisively, and addresses Jack, and says in a low, unsteady voice: "Wot you t'ink about dis boy? Heh?"

Over Jack's face (it is not a pleasant face — somewhat too hard and blasé for the face of a youth) passes a look of incredulity and scepticism; and his face expands into a smile of derision as he draws himself up with an air of self-importance and says: "Oh, well, Mr. Samuels, you don't mean to say that you believe all that stuff, do you? Now, you know he's only giving you taffy — you know



that, don't you? It takes a better story than that, I guess, to fool a man that's got his senses with him. You can't fool me —"

He gets no further. As I sit there, sick at heart, realizing that once again I am discredited and cast off, I see the broker's face grow red; see him grip his hands and straighten his body as though unable to contain himself; and the next moment he is on his feet, shaking his forefinger in the face of the surprised young man named Jack, and shouting passionately:

"You scoundrel vot you are *mit* your stuff un' taffy! You *gonoph* (thief)! You chicken-t'ief! You sport! You — you — you —!" He waves the youth aside with a gesture of withering scorn. "Dat's vot you get *mit* your sporty life midout religion or noddings. You got a heart like a lump o' cheese, un' you t'ink v'en you t'row a poor orphan on de street you show dat you're a man. You ain' no man. You're a little, *meesa* (homely) dinky dink of a *mensch* (human being), dat's vot you are — a high-liver on ten dollars a veek — a Broadway sport *mit* a bottle of vine fer de chorus girls, un' a hole in your pocket v'en ye meet a starvin' boy. Oo! You make me sick v'en I listen to your cheap talk vot don' cost noddings. Here you!" turning to me — "You're took. You voik here. Eight dollars a veek to begin wit'. Eight — No, you don' git no less dan dat sporty *goy* oveh dere if I knows et. Ten dollahs — de same vot he gits. — No, I teach dat sport a lesson. 'Leven dollahs — a dollah more'n him. Dat's vot he git fer runnin' down a boy dat's got no one to look afteh him."

He is so indignant at the attitude of his clerk, and so filled with emotion at my plight, and so breathless with excitement, and so exhausted after his exertion and his outburst of wrath, that when I try to express my gratitude



to him he cannot utter a word, but can only express in pantomime the disfavor with which my thanks are received. And when my sense of gratitude will not permit me to remain silent, he checks my utterance by an excited sweep of the hand, followed by a hasty retreat behind the counter, where, in an excess of emotion, he clutches the cord which dangles from the big jumping jack, and tugs at it until the figure performs the most marvellous acrobatic feats, and cries irritably:

“Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! — Look at de chump-in’ chack un’ vatch him chump!”

## CHAPTER XII

### WHEREIN MR. SAMUELS GROWS REMINISCENT

With a light heart I enter upon my new duties. I am no longer a tramp, nor the associate of criminals, but a youth who is on an equality with every earnest, ambitious youth in the big city of New York. I can meet men face to face and take pride in the thought that I am self-supporting, and that my prospects in life are as bright as those of any other man who strives to succeed in life.

My duties are light, and I perform them willingly and eagerly. I clean and dust the shop every morning upon my arrival, sweep the floor, and perform the janitor work. When this has been completed, I take the pledge-book and the redemption-book from the safe, and prepare for the more responsible work of entering the articles pledged and those which are redeemed.

Formerly Jack kept the books; but now that I have relieved him from that branch of work he assists Mr. Samuels in waiting upon customers, though the old gentleman insists upon appraising all articles himself, except at lunch time, when he leaves the shop in our charge until his return. We eat in a *kosher* restaurant a few doors below the pawnshop — Mr. Samuels at half past eleven, Jack shortly after twelve, and I at one o'clock. Sometimes Mr. Samuels is delayed for a quarter or half an hour beyond twelve o'clock, and then Jack grumbles so much, and consults his watch so frequently, that one might imagine he was the proprietor and the old gentleman a dilatory subordinate.

"Vell," says Mr. Samuels on one of these occasions, as

he enters the shop at half past twelve, "I s'pose, Chack, you got starvation cramps by dis time — vot?"

"I'm pretty hungry, I can tell you that," mutters Jack morosely, making a dive for his hat.

"Uf I vuz in your blace, un' I had me for a boss, I'd bounce me right away quick uf I come in so late," says my employer, chuckling good naturedly as he removes his hat and puts on his skull cap.

"Um!" growls the youth in high dudgeon, as he rushes out.

"*Sh'ma Yisroel* (Hear, O Israel)! Look at dat *fresser* (glutton) now! He got a run on like he vuz a fire horse un' de nex' block in flames. Ven de twelve o'clock v'istle blows, un' he got no vaiter standin' by his elbow, he make a rush like he hear de fire bells, un' all his *mishpocheh* (family) locked in de house. Neveh I seen such a bizness von a man in my life. A eatin' machine — dat's vot he is. He don' t'ink von noddings, he don' voik for noddings, but eat, eat, eat. Uf you open his head I bet you find noddings in it but *chazor* (pork) un' frankfurters. But his fahder *olov hasholum* —" and here the old man's voice softens — "ah, he vuz a different *Jehudah* (Jew)!"

"I s'pose you wuz good friends togedder."

"Friends? Ve vuz more'n friends. Ve vuz brudders."

He stands behind the counter, resting his arms upon the glass case, and gazing before him ruminatingly.

"Ve vuz born in de same village, vent to de same *chedar* (Hebrew school) un' grewed up togedder. Un' ven de *goyim* burned our houses, ve lost eferyt'ing, un' come to America togedder."

"W'y did they burn your houses?" I query.

"Fo' v'y? 'Cause it vuz Easter, un' 'cause ve vuz Chews."

"But w'y —?"

He draws his eyebrows together, as though in pain; and the furrows upon his face grow deeper, and his mouth hardens.

"Ve vuz Chews," he says harshly, "vuzen' dat anough? — un' de Christians vuz celebratin' Easter; un' in Poland Easter's de time v'en dey foist pray to a Chew in dere choiches un' den go out un' kill all de Chews dey kin find. Dat's Christianity — dat is. Dat's de vay dey celebrate Easter in de ole country v'ere I come from. We gaved 'em Chesus to pray to, un' dey've neveh fergifen Him fer bein' a Chew. Dat's v'y dey remembek us on Easter Day. Dat's v'y dey hate us, un' persecute us — because ve're one of His people, un' because He vuz one of us ven He vuz alive.

"De choich-bells vuz ringin'— we could hear 'em in de Chewish quarteh v'ere ve lifed — un' afteh avile de mob come our vay, *mit* a priest in de front, holdin' a big cross. Den ve locked our shops, un' our houses, un' vaited behind de closed vinders, shakin' like a *lulov* (palm branch). De vomen vuz cryin', un' de children vuz screamin', un' de men vuz prayin', un' out in de streets de mob vuz shoutin': 'Kill de Chews! Kill de Chews!' un' de priest vuz holdin' his cross up in de air un' yellin': 'Kill de Chews!'

"Dey done et. Dey had clubs un' knives, un' dey done et. I peeked out o' de vindeh a liddle un' I seen one uv 'em grab a liddle goil (she vuz t'ree years old, un' her name vuz Rachel — liddle Rachel Jablowsky, vot belonged to a poor vidow voman) one uv' em grabbed her un' t'rowed her to anoddeh one like she vuz some rubbekh ball, un' he caught her on de tip uv his knife!"

He stops, overcome by emotion. The tears roll down his cheeks, his lips quiver, sobs shake his form, and his fingers twitch convulsively. I stare at him, stirred to the depths; feeling myself swept by strange emotions; vaguely



realizing that I am listening to the tragedy of my race, and that, despite the years of segregation from my people, I am still bound by indissoluble ties to the race from which I had sprung.

“Den all at vonst dey started te burn de houses — un’ de men, un’ de women, un’ de little ones; un’ v’en dey tried to run oudt dey put a knife t’rough ’em like et vuz a slaughter-house. Some of de *Jehudim* vuz fightin’ fer dere lifes; but ven dey seen de *shool* (synagogue) burnin’ too, ven dey seen de House of God goin’ up in flames, den dey folded dere han’s un’ gif up de fight. De *shool!* ven ve saw dat burnin’, den ve gif up de fight, un’ said our *Sh’ma Yisroel* (Hear, O Israel), un’ got ready to die.”

The old man bows his head until his long grey beard covers his chest, and his sobs shake his form, and he clasps his hands convulsively. The horror of the scenes which he has witnessed overwhelms him; and not even the passing years have had the power to dim the terrors of that bloody Easter Day of long ago.

“How did yez escape?” I query, after waiting for him to grow more composed. He takes out his handkerchief, and wipes his eyes before replying. Then, in a voice, which shakes and breaks at intervals, he resumes his story.

He had a wife and child; and in their little bedroom the three huddled together, praying to their God, and waiting for the end. From the streets below came the hoarse cries of the brutal mob, the shrieks of the victims, the sound of weapons beating upon locked doors, the crash of window-glass and breaking crockery as stores were pillaged. Then followed the attack upon his house, the murder of his wife and child, his frantic efforts to defend them, the blow upon his head which felled him to the floor, the retreat of the mob after ransacking his dwelling and leaving him for dead beside the bodies of his dear ones. And, while he lay

there, the torch was applied to his house, and he was left to be consumed by the flames.

Then, up the burning stairs rushed his neighbor, searching for him, found that the woman and the child were dead, but that the man was still breathing. Taking him in his arms, he staggered down the stairs, and gained the open air just as the roof fell in. Together the two friends migrated to America — the one with his little boy, the other with his torturing memories. And thus was writ another inconspicuous paragraph in the huge tome of a million pages whose paper is made of the pulp of human hearts, whose ink is blood, and whose title is *The Tragedy of Israel*.

There is silence when the old man concludes his story. His bowed head, his shaking form, fill me with profound pity; and, in the presence of his grief, my lips grow incapable of framing commonplace speech. I walk slowly toward the green plush curtain which is drawn across the rear of the show-window; and, drawing it partly to one side, gaze meditatively upon the objects displayed in the window.

The battered telescope lies before me, and the rings, and brooches, and firearms, and the rusty sword with its leathern scabbard, and the box of bullets upon the ivory handle of a sword with rusty stains upon it. Perhaps those stains were once red blood; and perhaps those Bibles with torn bindings and that Hebrew prayer book upon the shelf witnessed the shedding of the blood which now is but a rusty stain. And all brought together (so runs my train of thought) in the shop of one who once participated in a tragedy not unlike that in which the sword and the Bibles participated in some foreign land.

I drop the green plush curtains, and steal a glance at Mr. Samuels. He is wiping his eyes, and blowing his nose, and appears to have grown more composed.

“Vell, vell!” he mutters; “Gawd is goot: v’y I should complain? My Leah un’ my liddle Yankele is at rest. Gawd has gifen, un’ Gawd has tooken away: blest be de name of Gawd!”

He bows his head reverently, and his lips move as though in prayer. Something tugs at my heart as I think of his suffering — those long years of mourning, years of loneliness and pain — and that meek submission to God’s will, that confidence in God’s justice, that faith in the Redeemer of Israel which triumphs over all the vicissitudes of life, and enables the harassed Jew to erect a shining altar in the dreary desert of his heart where he may worship God amid the solitude, and feel his Father’s presence close at hand.

## CHAPTER XIII

WHEREIN THE MAN IN BLUE VISITS MR. SAMUELS AND IS  
REBUFFED

It is a morning in October, and I am whistling light-heartedly as I perform my work about the pawnshop. The heaviness which had oppressed my heart in the dreary years which are past no longer oppresses me. I feel like a new being who has come into the world relieved of all heavy responsibilities and assigned to tasks whose performance is a pleasure and not a burden. I have passed through strange experiences of late, have learned to know the meaning of kindness and sympathy, and the world has lost its grey colors in my eyes, and has grown very beautiful.

I shall not attempt to describe in detail the thousand and one evidences of confidence and reliance upon what is best within me with which my employer unobtrusively appeals to my better self. He makes no attempt to pry into my confidence, or to fling moral precepts at my head in the hope that they may strike me ere I can dodge the formidable missiles. He is just good, and that is all, without even being conscious of his goodness — just good because God made him so and he can't help it — which, after all, is the only sort of goodness that's worth while.

When *Rosh Hashanah* (the Jewish New Year) approaches, he asks me, rather wistfully, whether I should like to go to *shool* (synagogue) with him; and when I assure him that I should be glad to go, he is so pleased that I am well repaid for overcoming the repugnance with which I



view the prospect of sitting through a service that no longer appeals to me. And so, on *Rosh Hashanah*, I find myself seated in a little synagogue in Hester Street, amid a throng of bearded men in high silk hats, and gazing upward at a gallery where the women are seated, looking down upon their husbands, fathers and sons. Many of those about me are humble pedlars who have left their push-carts so that they may draw forth their worn silk hats, put on their faded frockcoats, and array themselves as befits princes of the law entering their temple to meet their King.

And when I enter the *shool*, and am directed to Mr. Samuels' pew, he greets me with such pleasure and, withal, such dignity, that I know he feels himself to be a prince of the house of David in the palace of the King. I take up a prayer-book and find, to my surprise, that I have not forgotten how to read Hebrew (although I had not been in a synagogue since my childhood); and when I eagerly apprise my employer of my discovery, he is so pleased that he straightway insists upon being called up to the Torah and offering a blessing over the scrolls, and the cantor, at his direction, offers me a *mishe berach* (blessing in his behalf); but as no one in the congregation is acquainted with me, and as every man who pronounces a benediction over the scrolls of the law invokes blessings upon the members of his family and upon the friends whom he singles out for this distinction, no curious glances are directed toward me when my name is pronounced in Hebrew.

Notwithstanding my fears that the service would prove tiresome, I find myself interested in both the congregation and the service, especially when I discover that I can, with little difficulty, follow, in my prayer-book, the cantor's chanting.

But when *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) draws nigh, I view the approach of that holy day with some misgivings.

It is a day of fasting and of prayer, the holiest of all the days of the year. It is a day of self-examination, when the Jew should ask of his soul: "What hast thou done? What evil hast thou wrought which demands redress?" It is a day of contrition, when man should pray to God for forgiveness, and neither eat nor drink while he struggles to conquer, through penitence, the evil forces which have gained access to his soul. It is a day of high resolve and lofty hopes, when the penitent worshipper, humble and subdued, feels a new and nobler life stirring within his soul.

To me, who have been a stranger to my people since my childhood, and who entered the synagogue on *Rosh Hashanah* for the first time in many years, *Yom Kippur* carries no such solemn and audible message as it bears to the pious soul of my employer; and I, who have known so many days of hunger when life looked dark as midnight, now hesitate to devote a day to prayer and to fasting when the sun shines full upon me and the night is fled.

The day is not many years distant when I shall learn the meaning of penitence and prayer; when *Yom Kippur* shall indeed signify to me a spiritual awakening and a rebirth of the soul; when I shall feel what it means to wallow in sin and to emerge, shuddering, from the depths from which I have escaped — yes, the day is not many years distant when I shall learn the meaning of repentance and regeneration; but the time and the hour have not yet arrived, and, as yet, my soul is but half awake.

I do not relish the idea of fasting; but I realize that the old gentleman would be vastly pleased if I observed the day in the orthodox manner, and I am amply repaid for the inconvenience to which I purpose to subject myself when I observe the pleased smile and hear the gentle "Goot — goot" with which he receives the announcement of my decision. So I fast from evening to evening, and sit all day

beside my benefactor in the synagogue, and feel that I have done a good deed in giving him pleasure.

"Did you fast?" queries Jack next morning as we greet each other in the pawnshop.

"Yes."

"Like hell you did," says my companion, with a sceptical grin.

"I did so," I asseverate with some pride.

"Aw, quit your fooling!"

Just then Mr. Samuels enters, and, after discarding his hat and donning his skull cap, proceeds to interrogate my companion relative to the manner in which he observed the sacred day.

"Vell, Chack, how you done spend de day yeste'day?"

"Oh, pretty good."

"Putty goot. Um! Putty goot vot?"

"Oh, I was in *shool*. Don't you worry about that."

"How long you vos in *shool*? One minit *oder* two minits, you *goy*?"

"Say," answers Jack, feeling called upon to defend his orthodoxy, "I'm just as good a Jew as a lot of guys that stay in *shool* all day. I ain't no hypocrite."

"Sure you ain't. You're a goot, sporty guy, dat's vot you is, un' ef your fahder *olov hasholom* vos alive, he'd be proud von dat sporty guy of a son he got."

"I never hurt no one," mutters Jack sullenly.

"Sure you didn't. You nefer killed your mudder-in-law un' nefer poisoned your aunt. You're a *gutes Jungele* (good little youth), *Gi veh, Gi veh!* Mybe you fasted too, vot? How vos de oysters? — goot?"

"Well, say," responds Jack, somewhat nettled at this covert impeachment of his orthodoxy; "I don't pretend to be orthodox, I don't. I ain't no hypocrite. When I'm hungry I eat, and I don't care what day of the week it is."



"No, you're no hypocrite," sniffs Mr. Samuels contemptuously. "You're chust von of dem *chazorim* vot t'inks a hull lot more von his belly den von his relidchen. But vot kin you oxford von a *Jehudah* vot his gran'fahder's name vos Chacob un' his name is Chack! Chake ain' goot enough fo' him, so he got to be called Chack: it's more *goyish*. Ven he's called Chack no von vill know he's a Chew midout dey look on his face. On a dark night, mit de lights all out, no Broadway swell could know dat Chack is Chake."

"Oh, give us a rest!" mutters Jack wearily.

"Vot de name vos von your ansistors Abraham, Isaac un' Chacob?"

"What the hell —!"

"Dere he goes again! Dere he goes again like you oben a beer bottle un' de gas comes out. Vot I ask you is: Vot you would call your ansistors Abraham, Isaac un' Chacob?"

Instead of answering, Jack puts both hands in his pockets, strolls nonchalantly to the window, and gazes out into the street.

"I tell you vot you would call 'em uf you had your vay — Abraham would be Archie, Isaac would be Isidore, un' Chacob would be Chack. A fine *mishpochah* (family) dey would vas, vasen' dey?"

I am so amused at the doleful expression upon the old gentleman's face as he apostrophizes the callous youth that I take no heed of the opening of the street door until I perceive that a tall man in a blue serge suit has entered the shop, and is closing the door behind him. He is thin and angular, with blue eyes and pink cheeks, and, although there is something familiar in his face and bearing, I cannot recall, at the moment, when or where I had met him.

But I am not kept long in doubt, for, with a sharp



glance at me, he advances a few steps into the shop and says casually: "Hello! Smith-Gordin, how are you?"

Smith-Gordin! My feet grow leaden, and my thoughts suddenly grow confused, as though some one had dealt me a heavy blow upon the head and had stunned me momentarily. And then, amid the confusion, rises a picture of the Man in Blue to whom I was submitted for inspection in Cortlandt Street by the Man in Brown, and once again I seem to feel the pressure of the fingers which forced my head back, and to see the eyes of the two big men staring into mine and searing me with their keen glances so that they may mark me as a branded man forever thereafter.

"Vell! Vot et 'tis?" Mr. Samuels' voice is sharp and dry, and he eyes the detective with a cold look as though he scents an interloper in the stranger who addresses his clerk so familiarly.

"I'm a detective. I don't know whether you know it or not," says the Man in Blue with easy assurance; "but maybe it would surprise you to know that you've got a crook working for you." And here he leans upon the glass case, and indicates me with a sweep of the hand, and then waits, with a self-satisfied air, to enjoy the effect of this disclosure upon my employer.

"A crook?" queries Mr. Samuels in feigned astonishment, nodding his head vigorously, and stroking his beard. "Vot de boy done?"

"Done? Say, you know what those crooks are: I needn't tell you that," says the Man in Blue in a confidential voice, as he draws a big cigar from his pocket, and proceeds to light a match.

"De boy done ye somet'in' mybe?" persists the old gentleman in a soft voice, leaning forward, and peering upward into the blue eyes of his visitor.

"Oh, he never did anything to me," retorts the Man in

Blue, inflating his chest and smiling. "I'd like to see the crook as would tackle me, I would. He'd be pretty sick of his job before he'd get through with me, I'm thinking." And here he smiles so broadly, and puffs such a cloud of smoke toward the ceiling, that his personality quite dwarfs the little man who eyes him from behind the counter.

"Who he robbed, or moidered, or somet'in'? Vot?" Mr. Samuels queries persistently, still in those soft, deferential tones which constitute man's tribute to Pluto and Camera Eyes.

"Oh, I can't exactly give you his record yet. We're tracing that up an' 'll have it pretty soon. But when I tell you that he's a pretty dangerous crook you can take my word for it that it's so."

"But vot he done?"

"Say," says the Man in Blue, tapping Mr. Samuels upon the shoulder familiarly; "leave it to me when I tell you that he's as crooked as a ram's horn. Why, only a few months ago he was the pal of Red Bill, and Red Bill's a crook whose mug has been down at headquarters I don't know how long."

"Yes, I s'bose so, mybe; but dis boy's name vassen' Red Bill. He's chust a reg'lar little Chew midout fahder or mudder, un' I van's te know vot he done."

"Oh, say! if you want to take your chances with that crook," says the Man in Blue, in offended tones, turning from the counter, "you can do it, B U T —" and here he returns to the counter, and leans over the glass case until his face almost touches that of my employer — "if you miss any goods from your place don't blame M E. Don't blame M E," he repeats emphatically, flinging all responsibility off his shoulder with a wave of the hand. "I done my duty, and now it's up to you."

"Chust a moment!" says Mr. Samuels mildly, detaining

the Man in Blue, and drawing back the curtain from the window. "Oxcuse me! Chust a moment!"

He stretches his left hand upward to a pile of books which rest upon a shelf in the window, takes down one of the volumes, and opens its dusty pages.

"Oxcuse me chust a minit," he murmurs apologetically, turning the leaves of the volume and scanning the pages hurriedly. "I find et right away quick in a minit. Oh, yes: here it is I guess mybe. Vot dat is?" shoving the book over the counter toward the Man in Blue, and pointing toward a line half way down the page at which the volume has been opened.

"I don' read English not so good needer, *aber* mybe you kin tell me uf you read it vot it is de nint' commandment about bearin' false vitness against your neighbor."

"Oh, cheese it!" mutters the Man in Blue, brushing the book aside with a gesture of disgust. "The Ten Commandments don't go in New York City, old man. This ain't no Sunday school town. The Bible's all right in its way — I ain't saying a word against it — but we get our law from Albany nowadays and not from the Bible. That," with a condescending nod toward the open book, "may be all right in Poland; but over here we've got a police department that's got more influence with Tammany Hall than Moses ever had, and the Bible don't go with headquarters. It's the rules of the police department that's our Bible these days, and if we waste our time on any other rules we get fired. Now, as to this here crook of yours —"

"You chust leave dat crook alone!" cries Mr. Samuels in a voice trembling with emotion. "Uf he ever vos a crook you made him von — you un' dem odder guys in police headquarters vot got dere law von Albany instead of von de Bible. Of course de Ten Commandments don' go in



New York City: you ain't edchicated up to it yet. Bimeby, ven you git a little civilised, like my people vos t'ree t'ousan' years ago, you'll find dat Moses vos a bigger man dan de boss von Tammany Hall, un' de Ten Commandments vos vort' a little more dan de rules of de police department. *Aber* now —" He gives a shrug of his shoulders and a gesture of despair. Then, changing his manner, he points to me, and his eyes flash, and his voice trembles with indignation as he cries: "Look him on! A poor boy mit no fahder or mudder. You crooks von de police department —"

"Stop *that!*" interjects the detective sharply. "Don't you dare call us crooks." And he clenches his fists, and his eyes blaze threateningly.

"No, you ain' no crooks: it's de rest o' de woild as is crooked, un' on'y de police department as is straight. It's boys like him vot is crooked. Mit no charge against him, un' no evidence, de on'y law in his favor is de Ten Commandments, un' dey don' count mit de *chazorim* on de police force in New York. Vell, mybe dey don' count mit you 'cause de people vot made de laws in Albany un' de rules of the police department never heard of dem, seein' as de Bible is a book vot de politicians don' keep on de top shelf of dere library un' on'y use ven dey git sworn into office; but de rules in dot book vos good enough for my people long before your police department put up dere headquarters in Mulberry Street, un' it's good enough for me to-day. Un' I tell you dat poor boy is got de law of Moses in his favor, un' I'm goin' to stand by him — you understan'? — I'm goin' to stan' by him," he repeats with excited gestures, "un' I'm goin' to trust him so long as I vant, un' longer ven I vant to, too; un' I'm goin' to raise his vaches right away von to-day on; un' I'm goin' —"

How far his excess of indignation and loyalty and good-



ness would have carried my benefactor had the Man in Blue been content to remain patiently to the end of the harangue no one will ever know, for the detective, who has been fuming and fussing impatiently for some moments, cuts into the flow of talk with an angry shout of "Go to hell!" as he stalks to the door.

"Uf I go to hell mybe ve'll meet again," retorts Mr. Samuels with flushed countenance; and, as the door closes upon the detective, the old man mutters contemptuously: "*Cailiff* (Hound)!" and adjusts his skull cap, and goes up to me, and pats me upon the head, and mutters brokenly: "Poor boy! Poor boy!"

The tenderness in his voice, the gentleness of his touch, the sweetness and goodness of his nature, the warmth of his defence — his defence of me, a stranger, an outcast, rescued from the depths of misery and despair — all these touch me strangely, and, as I perceive the tears rolling down his cheeks, my bosom heaves, and I, too, weep as I bend down to kiss his wrinkled hand.

"Poor boy!" he repeats, brushing the tears from his eyes, "poor little *kindele* (child)! Don' cry. Gawd don' never desert His people. Chust trust in Gawd: He's all right." And, taking my face in his hands, he kisses me upon the forehead. Then, looking round, and seeing that Jack is staring at us with an expression of cynical amusement upon his countenance, the old man cries irritably: "Vell, v'y you don' voik? V'y you stand around like a lazy chumpin' chack dat you is, mit your hands in your pocket, un' bizness rotten, un' nobody doin' a t'ing?"

His eyes, roving about the shop as though in search of some object which will relieve his pent-up feelings, rest upon the wooden figure suspended from the ceiling; and, in another moment, he has made a dive for the cord which dangles from the jumping jack, and is tugging at it until

the legs of the figure threaten to fly up to the ceiling, and the painted body grows quite spasmodic with its efforts to respond to his violent demands. Then, as the arms fly up and down, and the legs likewise disport themselves, he shouts querulously:

“Git to voik mit yourself, you lazy boys! Bizness is rotten. Vatch him chump! Oh, chust look him on! Ain’t he a beauty! Chust look at dat chumpin’ chack un’ vatch him chump!”

## CHAPTER XIV

### ABOUT THE PECULIAR CONDUCT OF THE YOUTH NAMED JACK, AND OF HOW A BROOCH DISAPPEARS

My fellow-laborer Jack views me with disfavor. Perhaps it is the marked preference evinced for me by our employer, perhaps it is the increase in my wages, which arouses his jealousy — whatever the reason may be, his hostility to me is soon evident.

He is not a well-favored youth. His grey eyes are small and shifty, and his sandy hair, combed in pompadour fashion, surmounts a sallow face whose expression is too hard and blasé for the face of youth. It is the face of one who has stared so long into the bright lights of Broadway that the lights within his soul have grown dim with neglect.

Oh, he is a gay young man, is Jack, though how, with his small earnings, he can afford to live so gay a life is more than I can understand. He derives much pleasure from filling my ears with descriptions of gastronomical achievements in the beer-wine-and-lobster palaces of Broadway; and speaks of the beauties who adorn the New York stage as though he held their hearts in his vest pocket and hesitated to decide whether he should retain or discard the vest.

Jack loves to keep books. Not books from the library, or from the publishers. Oh, no. Literature, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, is merely "punk," though it must be admitted that certain foreign novels in English dress are sufficiently salacious to entitle them to respectful consideration at the hands of a gay, gilded, Broadway

germ. And if ever a human being reminds me of the ways and the attributes of a germ, it is Jack as he hunts through dusty files or opens dusty books as though reluctant to leave them.

Yes, he loves to keep books; but his affection for these products of manufacture is apparently concentrated upon the books of account appertaining to the business in which we are employed. There is the pledge-book, wherein are entered the articles pledged, the dates when pawned, the amounts loaned, and the names and addresses of the owners; and there is the redemption-book wherein a record is kept of the articles redeemed, and of the sums received upon such redemption.

Formerly the Germ kept these books of account; but when Mr. Samuels employed me, he directed me to take charge of them, while Jack was directed to assist his employer thereafter in other respects. The Germ did not abandon the books to which, after the manner of his species, he had been accustomed to cling, without manifest reluctance; nor did he cease, for some weeks, in his efforts to persuade me to entrust him with the bookkeeping because of his greater familiarity with the work; and even after I had been employed for several months in the pawnshop he would still, at times, indicate by his manner that he had not forgiven me for superseding him as bookkeeper.

"Say," he remarks one day as we find ourselves alone in the shop, "you like keeping books, don't you?"

"I'd like it putty good if de spellin' wuzen' kinder hard fer me," I answer, closing the pledge-book wherein I had made an entry, and resting my elbow upon the desk as I turn to chat with him.

"Well, why don't you let me attend to it then? I've told you more than once that I don't mind looking after the books."



"I know; but de boss said ez I should do et, so I guess I'll do et," I answer doggedly, and for a few moments there is silence in the shop.

"Say," he says, breaking the silence; "that detective that was here the other day — he thought you were a pretty slick sort of guy, didn't he?"

"W'y?" I query, feeling my face flush.

"Well," with a knowing smile, "you don't suppose the cops would go to the trouble of hunting you up every little while if they didn't think you were a pretty slick customer — do you?"

The subject is so painful to me, and his smirk is so sickening that I am half disposed to shake him by the collar; but he seems so insignificant a germ as he stands there, bending over the counter and leering at me, that I contain myself, and curtly answer that I don't know what opinion the cops may have of me, and that I don't care.

"You don't care?" laughs Jack, passing his hand over the top of the counter as though seeking to gather in some germs to bear him company, and then examining the nails of his hand as though they were perched thereon. "You don't care?" he repeats with another laugh. "Well, now, if I was considered so important I'd be mighty proud of it, I would."

"Would ye?" I murmur indifferently.

"You bet I would. And say, Sam"—here he lowers his voice confidentially—"between you and me, I rather think that you ain't quite as innocent as you make believe you are."

He winks one eye, and grins, and puts his hands in his pockets, and saunters over to where I am seated, and stands before me, gazing down at me quizzically.

"You've got some game on, old man," he proceeds, tapping me upon the shoulder, "and you might just as well

let a fellow in on it, for I need money badly, and I'm clean broke."

His impudence, fortified by his assurance, almost takes my breath away. I am so taken aback by his proposal that I can only stare at him in astonishment and stammer: "Wot d'ye mean?"

"Oh, drop that make-believe way of yours," he pursues irritably, "and don't be afraid to talk out to me. I ain't no spring-chicken, and I guess there's money enough in this here business," with a wave of the hand which takes in the contents of the shop, "for both of us. You can trust me as well as you could trust Red Bill, or whatever his name was, and maybe a darn sight better; and if there's any money to be made I'll be square with you if you'll be square with me — so there!"

The shifty eyes of the Germ rest upon me as he concludes; but I feel so staggered at his insolent proposal that I cannot find words to adequately express my indignation.

"I t'ink you're a crook," I cry hotly.

"Quit your fooling," he retorts complacently, and his manner indicates but too plainly his belief that my indignation is merely assumed. "Let's talk sense and get down to business."

"You're a crook," I repeat indignantly. "Ye'd rob de bes' man in de woild. Ye ought te be 'shamed o' yerself, talkin' like dat. He's too good te ye, he is, an' ye're too crooked te care a damn. T'hell wit' ye!"

Perhaps my anger impresses him at last; perhaps he begins to realise that he has gone too far, and that my indignation may, after all, be genuine: certain it is that his manner undergoes a sudden change, that he attempts to pass off lightly what has transpired as though it were but a joke, for he breaks into a laugh, and claps me upon the shoulder, and cries lightly: "Well! well! That's rich,

that is! You really thought I meant it. Ha! ha! ha! but it takes a long time for you to see a joke." And he chuckles so much, and laughs so loudly, that I wonder whether, after all, it may not have been a joke on his part, and whether I have not acted the part of a fool in losing my temper because of a rude jest.

I do not speak of the matter to my employer. My own experience in the past has made me so keenly conscious of the havoc which may be wrought in a man's life by a false accusation of dishonesty, that I do not venture to repeat the conversation lest I do my companion an injustice. It seems incredible to me that any person could be capable of betraying the confidence of so noble a man as the benefactor who has befriended me. I have no proof of Jack's dishonesty; and surely I, who have suffered so much unjustly, should be the last to charge another with moral turpitude unless there be ample proof to sustain such accusation.

The weeks pass, and somehow, as winter draws near, it seems to me that a gloom settles down upon the pawnshop. I do not know what causes it; I cannot account satisfactorily for the impression which its presence leaves upon my mind; I am not even certain that it exists anywhere save in my imagination; and yet I feel — and the impression grows stronger as the days go by — that my employer's mind is troubled, and that secret cares are oppressing him.

I observe the change in his nervous actions and in the troubled look in his eyes. I perceive it in his querulous speech and in the impatience which marks his utterances. I see it in his careworn appearance and in his inelastic walk. The jumping jack seems to feel it, too, for its cord is pulled so often to relieve the tension under which my employer appears to labor that it seems to grow quite melancholy in the state of exhaustion to which it is invariably reduced



by its extraordinary exertions, and cuts such a pathetic figure as it dangles from the ceiling when at rest that it appears to bemoan the fate which makes it subject to a tyrant's will.

"Vell, Sam," says Mr. Samuels one afternoon as he leans upon the glass case which rests upon the counter; "bizness is putty *shoful* (very poor), vot?"

I have not observed that business is dull, and, in fact, have been quite busy most of the time since entering upon my present employment; but, as I am not familiar with the volume of business formerly done, I assume, from Mr. Samuels' remark, that the profits were larger in former years.

"Things are dull all over," says Jack the Germ; "everybody's complaining."

"*Aber* dey nefer vos so vorse like dey vos now. A man mus' got to go *machullah* (bankrupt) uf it get no better putty soon. *Oi veh!* I git a hundred years old efery day mit troubles."

"Maybe it'll git better w'en de holidays come," I suggest, in an effort to relieve his depression.

"*Schmoos* (nonsense)!" he mutters irritably. "De holiday bizness don' make up for de loss vot you got for de year. I break my head for de reason un' I don' can guess for v'y it vuz, but de longer I do bizness de vorser it vuz got."

"I don't think there are so many people passing this place as there use to be," observes the Germ, with a glance out of the window as though to verify his observation.

"You don' t'ink a lot uf ot'er t'ings vot you should t'ink," retorts the old man irascibly, as though irritated at the Germ's ready concurrence in the admission that business prospects are not bright, and disappointed because neither of his employés can succeed in deluding him into a state of confidence and contentment which his reason re-



jects. "Dere vos chust so many people passing dis street like dere vos ten years ago, un' mybe more; *aber* de bizness voz goin' down like it dropped out de bottom, un' I don' know for v'y. Peoples voz pawnin' un' voz redeemin' like dey voz doin' all de time before, *aber* de profits voz gone, un' t'ings voz *shoful*, un' de pawnbroker bizness voz gone mit de dogs."

He sighs deeply, and glances down at the articles of jewelry in the glass case whereon he leans, as though lost in sad reflections. But suddenly his gaze becomes fixed for a moment upon a narrow space between two gold rings; then he bends down until his face almost touches the glass top of the case, and his eyes rove from one object to another as though seeking something which he cannot find.

"Vere's dat di'mon' brooch?" he queries sharply.

"Wot brooch?"

"De von mit de five di'mon's vot vos layin' dem rings between."

I hasten to his side. So does Jack. A diamond brooch, valued at about two hundred dollars, is missing from its customary place in the glass case. We scrutinize every article of jewelry which lies exposed before us, but search in vain for the missing ornament.

"Mybe it mus' got in de wrong place," suggests Mr. Samuels nervously; so the Germ pushes aside the musical instruments dangling from the ceiling in front of the big glass case which stands against the side wall, and searches among its abandoned heirlooms for the missing brooch, while I explore the show window in vain.

"My! but your face is red," remarks the Germ as I turn back to the counter. And then he adds, in a voice of innocent surprise, as though struck by my appearance: "What makes your face so red?"

I am positive that, up to this moment, my face has not

been flushed, though I have naturally been somewhat perturbed at the thought that an article of jewelry is missing from the case; but no sooner has the Germ remarked upon my appearance and put his query to me, than I feel the blood surging to my cheeks and dyeing my brow red. For, suddenly, something tells me that the Germ is seeking to fasten suspicion upon me; that, with feigned guilelessness, he is artfully aiming to raise doubt as to my fidelity in the mind of my benefactor: and that which utterly disconcerts me is the realization of the fact that *now my face is indeed red*, and that Mr. Samuels is eyeing me curiously, and that I have the agitated appearance which is frequently ascribed to a consciousness of guilt.

The old man eyes me for but a moment, and, rightly or wrongly, I imagine that there is suspicion in his eyes; for I can conceive of his state of mind, realizing forcibly, as I do, that I bear the evidences of guilt — as those evidences are generally accepted by students of human nature — in my countenance.

“My face ain’ red,” I murmur, and realize, ere the words have left my lips, that I have spoken foolishly.

“Not red?” laughs the Germ; “why, you’re as red as a lobster.”

“Shut your mout’, you *goy*,” growls Mr. Samuels, coming to my rescue. “Uf you know so much about brooches like you know about lobsters un’ odder *trefeh* (unclean) t’ings you might vos better off.” Then, reverting to the subject of the missing brooch, he queries: “You’re sure it vosen’ got laid away in de wrong place?”

“It was here, in this case, two or three days ago,” says the Germ; “I’m sure I saw it here Monday.” Then, turning to me, he says: “You’re sure it wasn’t redeemed? Look up your redemption book.”

I am put upon the defensive! I realize it, and feel keenly my position. I have done nothing to warrant suspicion, but I have evinced agitation at a moment when it was natural for me to feel agitated; and I realize that, when a man feels himself suspected of wrongdoing, the red cheeks of innocence are just as damning evidence against him as the red cheeks of guilt.

"It wasn't redeemed," I say, as I glance over the pages of the book, and then close it.

"I didn't say it was redeemed," responds the Germ, in offended tones. "I asked you whether you were *sure* it wasn't redeemed, that's all. No use of getting hot under the collar when a fellow asks you a question, is there?"

There is something so Machiavellian in his cunning and in the insinuations which his words conceal and yet convey, that I feel a rage within me which I can scarcely control. He doesn't say that the brooch has been redeemed. Oh, no! he is too shrewd to make a direct accusation which he cannot prove. But he insinuates as pointedly as he can the *possibility* of the brooch having been redeemed, and the redemption money unaccounted for, and no entry made of the transaction.

"I don' like yer talk," I say, sidling up to him and clenching my fists. He is standing now in front of the counter, having finished his futile examination of the contents of the case in the rear. "I don' like yer talk," I repeat, glaring at him, and ignoring the presence of Mr. Samuels.

He retreats at sight of my menacing attitude, but I follow him.

"Here, Sam!" the old gentleman calls warningly. "No fightin'!"

I pay no heed to him. I am too angry at that moment

to pay attention to any man except one — and that one a flat-chested, sallow-faced germ of a man with a germ of a soul whose insignificance enrages me.

“D’ye mean te say I’m a crook?” I hiss, thrusting my face forward as he comes to a halt, until it is so close to his that he draws back his head.

He moistens his lips with his tongue ere replying; then, “Yes,” he shouts defiantly: but the word is scarcely out of his mouth when my fist strikes his cheek bone, and sends him to the floor.



## CHAPTER XV

### CONCERNING THE JUMPING JACK AND LITTLE BLACK EYES AND LITTLE BLUE EYES

"Am I a crook?" I shout, glowering at the figure which sprawls at my feet, and standing, with clenched fists, over my accuser. He raises himself on his hands, and turns a vindictive face upon me.

"Am I—?" But Mr. Samuels is now at my side, grasping my arms, reproaching me for my intemperate act, and pleading with me to contain myself.

"A *Jehudah* (Jew) — a *Jehudah* should done forgot himself like dot!" he wails. "Such a bizness mit a punch — *Oi veh! Oi veh!* Hold your han's down, un' don' make you got no fist on, needer. *Oi, vot a temper for a Chew!* Be 'shamed von yourself, Sam! Be 'shamed!"

As his voice, trembling with excitement, assails my ears, the note of distress in it strikes deeper, and pierces my heart; and suddenly I realize that I am causing pain to the gentle soul that has befriended me. So I open my clenched fists, and turn away shamefacedly as the Germ rises from the floor, and passes his hand over his sandy hair (now somewhat mussed) and brushes the dirt from his clothes, and gives me a look of hate with his small grey eyes, and mutters an oath.

"I'll get square with you!" he says vindictively.

"Shut up mit you!" cries the old gentleman irascibly. "Serves you right for hangin' a mout' on like you got."

We resume our work, and there is no further reference made to the missing brooch. But, though the subject is no

longer discussed, I feel that the spirit of sympathy and harmony which has hitherto pervaded the shop is forever flown. Though my master strives to act as though nothing had come between us, though he is all kindness and goodness in his attitude towards me, I cannot help wondering whether he really believes in my innocence or whether he merely strives to retain his faith in me. At night I go to bed with a heavy heart, and in the morning I resume the work from which all pleasure has fled.

The diamond brooch haunts me like some tangible but invisible being, and gives me no rest. It is with me throughout the day and robs my hours of labor of all joys. It follows me to my lodging-house and enters, with me, into my room. It lies heavily upon my breast all night and creeps into my dreams like some vile thing which refuses to depart.

I do not know what Mr. Samuels would have done to dispel the gloom hovering over his shop if the jumping jack had not been ever ready to perform his antics. Whenever the atmosphere of distrust grows oppressive, whenever the mutual dislike and antagonism existing between the Germ and myself threaten to develop into wordy or actual war, the old gentleman enlists the services of the wooden figure, and relieves the strain by focussing attention upon the toy's gyrations.

The fame of the mannikin is not confined to the circle of those who are forced by need of money to visit the pawnshop. All the children in the neighborhood are acquainted with the jumping jack and love him. They come at all hours of the day, and often try the patience of the grey-bearded old man; but invariably the visits end in acrobatic demonstrations which leave the visitors open-mouthed with wonder. The youths and the maidens come singly or in pairs, with stockings or without; and on one occasion an

aggregation of a dozen begrimed future citizens, ranging in age from seven to ten years, and proudly introducing themselves as members of "de Houston Street gang," visit the shop to view the famous toy.

I often think of those days, and marvel at the magnetic force which drew those poor children to that wonderful mannikin as though he were some visitor from fairyland come to draw out into the sunlight the Forgotten Children of New York hidden in the dark caves of its tenements. And I wonder whether that lifeless figure was not a greater power for good than many a man and woman to whom the Forgotten Children were but strangers; and whether the hand which pulled the cord was not in truth a fairy hand which God had bound to a little Jew's body in order to bring the Land of Magic a little nearer to the East Side of New York, a little closer to the dim eyes of the Forgotten Children dreaming in the darkness.

I recall a visit from two little neighbors one afternoon.

Mr. Samuels is standing behind the counter when the street door is slowly opened, whereupon he adjusts the skull cap which somehow slid over to one ear, and prepares to greet the new arrival. But it is only a little boy who enters, followed by another little boy, and both are so small that their combined height would scarcely suffice to equal that of a full-grown big little boy. The first little boy has a pert little nose and wondering black eyes, and the second little boy has a pert little nose and wondering blue eyes, and both have patched trousers and ragged shirts, and both are barefooted and dirty, but one (he of the angelic blue eyes) is a little dirtier than the other.

He of the black eyes, being apparently the bolder spirit, holds the hand of his fellow and leads him toward the counter, where both halt at a sufficient distance from that mountainous fixture to enable them to discern the head of Mr.



Samuels, high above the mountain heights, in that elevated region where the giants dwell.

"We want to thee de thumpin' thack," proclaims Black Eyes manfully, with a boldness which constitutes a direct challenge to deny, if one dare, one of the rights solemnly guaranteed by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

"Me too," pipes Blue Eyes, shrilly proclaiming his constitutional rights.

"Oh, de chumpin' chack?" says Mr. Samuels, striving to look serious, though the shadow of a smile plays about his mouth and drives away the sadness which has hovered there.

"Yeth," from Blue Eyes and Black Eyes in chorus.

"You like him to see chump, vot?"

"Yeth." Again the shrill chorus from the lower regions, addressed to the giant high overhead.

"All right."

The hand of my employer grasps the cord which dangles from the wooden figure overhead, and he is about to utter his usual formula in focussing the attention of the tots upon the antics of the toy, when the children (to whom the jumping jack is apparently no stranger) quite unexpectedly anticipate his utterance; for, standing before the counter, and gazing upward with the rapt eyes of devotees before a wooden god, they raise their childish voices in the invocation which the idol demands.

"Oh, thee the thumpin' thack an' wath him thump," they murmur in chorus, standing hand in hand before the venerated fane, and confidently awaiting the miracle. Now does Mr. Samuels proceed to rouse the drowsy marionette. Now does the yellow blood course swiftly through the cheeks of the awakened hero, and the blue blood through his legs, and the red blood through his arms, and if there be any



gore in animated shoes intent upon performing acrobatic achievements, there cannot be the slightest doubt but that the orange gore courses through his footwear so rapidly as to leave his toes in as hot and uncomfortable a state as it is possible for toes to be when they are hidden from view beneath a coat of orange paint. Now does the shining hero display his accomplishments. Now do the legs go up and forthwith descend; now do the arms rise and fall rhythmically; now do all his limbs spasmodically paw the air, execute some intricate terpsichorean movement, and dance with that tireless energy which ever characterizes the mingling of blue blood with gore of less aristocratic shades and tints. Now does the high green hat with difficulty maintain its equilibrium amid the evolutions of its owner, while the red coat seems to be in danger of falling off, and the eyes and nose and mouth of the figure blink and twist and smirk as only black dots can under the stress of overwhelming emotions.

Mr. Samuels puffs, and Mr. Samuels perspires, but still he tugs and tugs at the cord with boundless energy, while Black Eyes and Blue Eyes look on with that speechless wonder which converts eyes into saucers, and saucers into dinner-plates. Finally, when Mr. Samuels breathes so hard and grows so weak that he appears to be on the verge of nervous exhaustion, he desists from his labour, and, raising a trembling hand threateningly toward his tiny visitors, he gasps:

“Now you done et! Now you done et! I’m dead — done for — mit a feelin’ like I vuz bustin’. *Meshuggah* (crazy) I get mit you babies. *Oi veh!* my chest! Ven I talk I can’t speak. Oudt mit you — quick!”

Black Eyes and Blue Eyes edge away from the counter in alarm. Black Eyes inserts a dirty finger in his mouth, and Blue Eyes, discovering upon his left hand a thumb whose

accumulations rival the finger of his playmate, proceeds to suck the delicious member unctuously. Then, with their disengaged hands clasped in friendly union, Black Eyes and Blue Eyes open the door which leads to the street, and, with one last longing look of farewell directed at the charmed figure with the limber limbs, they pass out of the shop, leaving Mr. Samuels gasping and puffing behind the counter.

## CHAPTER XVI

### HOW SOME FUNDS DISAPPEAR, AND HOW I LOSE MY EMPLOYMENT

It is December, and the days are growing cold and dreary. The month is not yet in its 'teens, but it seems so cold at times that I sometimes wonder vaguely whether it will live to partake of the holiday spirit of Christmas or will die of chills and colds in its infancy.

The days are not only growing cold, but short — so short that the night sends old Sol to bed before the old fellow is half ready to retire, and sweeps the day off the face of the earth at an hour when darkness ought never to be tolerated for one moment in any well-regulated mundane establishment.

The winds, too, are behaving most outrageously, forcing their way into people's houses without waiting to be invited, shaking and rattling windows until they interrupt the conversation of families gathered about the coal-stoves, blowing the hats off pedestrians about the public streets as though hats were of no value and could be replaced without effort or expenditure, breathing into people's faces until they redden, and into people's eyes until they water, and nipping people's ears until many a man wishes that the naughty wind, ever bent upon mischief like a romping boy, could be laid across one's knees, and spanked with vigor to relieve one's pent-up and frozen emotions.

One morning Mr. Samuels announces that he will be obliged to take a train for Albany in the afternoon in order to meet an acquaintance who is indebted to him in a large

amount, and that he will not return to New York until Sunday. So, for the greater part of the afternoon and all of the following day, the Germ and I are in joint control of the shop, left to our own resources, and doomed to while away the time in each other's company, free from the restraining influence of our employer.

And a delightful day and a half we pass together! Most of the time we exchange only such words as are called forth by the exigencies of business.

He glares at me as though he were a very malignant Germ, intent upon infecting me with some virulent disease; but I have become so accustomed to the attacks of germs of his kind that I have grown quite immune. Hour after hour passes in charmed silence or in such pleasant badinage as enlivens social intercourse between two such kindred souls as we; and it is, of course, with manifest reluctance that we finally close the shop on Saturday night after the round of pleasure which has been ours. I glance over my books before leaving the premises, assure myself that every transaction has been duly entered, find that half a dozen articles have been redeemed and that the sums received range from five dollars paid by a young man for the redemption of a diamond scarf pin to one hundred and eighteen dollars paid by a bleached blonde for the redemption of a diamond ring: and, having satisfied myself that the accounts have been correctly entered, I lock the compartment in the safe containing the receipts for the day, then close the safe and, while Jack prepares to lock the front door with his key, leave the shop without bidding my surly companion good night.

On Monday morning, when I arrive at our place of business, I find that my employer has preceded me. He is opening the safe as I enter, and greets me warmly, telling me



about his trip, and of how glad he is to get back to New York and to business.

"No odder city vuz got such a push like New Yorick," he concludes, with that note of pride in his voice which characterizes the metropolitan business man extolling the merciless forces which raise aloft or bury reputations and fortunes. "Such a push, un' such a enerchy un' bizness vot it done got! Odder cities is like a hole in a *matzo* (unleavened bread) by de side. Albany, odder Cracow, or vot de name is, ain't a von, two, t'ree standin' nex' to it."

At this juncture Jack appears, and is greeted by his employer with a good morning, which he returns pleasantly enough.

"Vell, you done much bizness v'ile I vuz away, vot?"

"About de same as usual," I reply.

"A watch was redeemed," Jack explains, "and a clock, and a scarf pin, and a diamond ring, and a few little odds and ends."

Mr. Samuels unlocks the compartment containing the receipts for Friday and Saturday, and counts the money.

He opens the redemption-book, and scrutinizes the entries therein, running his finger over the items which I have entered, and bending his head over the open book, while I proceed to dust the counter.

"Did che said a di'mon' ring?" he queries in perplexed tones.

"Yes," replies Jack unconcernedly.

"De last item," I explain, pausing in my occupation.

"It wuz de las' t'ing redeemed Saturday night."

"I don' see it."

"Don' see it?"

"Dere wuzen' none such a entry here."

With a perplexed glance at him, but confident that he is

mistaken, as I distinctly recollect entering the item before closing the books for the day, I hurry to his side.

"Sure it's dere," I begin confidently, glancing over his shoulder; and then I stop, and gasp, and stare at the book incredulously.—

There is no such item upon the page at which we are gazing!

I cannot describe the sensation which overpowers me at this discovery. I ask myself whether my memory is at fault, whether it is possible that I could have forgotten to enter the redemption: and yet I clearly recall every circumstance connected with the transaction from the moment when the bleached blonde entered the shop to the moment when I seated myself at the desk and made an entry of the sum received from her — one hundred and eighteen dollars.

Is it possible that I am deceiving myself, and that my memory is playing me false at this moment?

Here is the book, and the record speaks for itself. Incredible as it appears to be, I am constrained to admit to myself that I have failed to enter the transaction.

But, of course, no serious harm has been done. My neglect to enter the redemption in the book of account has injured no one. The money which I have received is at hand; but the thought that I have been derelict in the performance of my duties affects me so keenly that I stammer as I feebly express my surprise.

"I — I — t'ought I put it in," I mutter in a voice so low that I inwardly rebuke myself for my want of courage; "but, of course, so long's de money's here —"

"But de money wuzen' here!"

"Not here?"

Something seems to surge through my brain and leave it numb. I stare at Mr. Samuels as though he were some strange creature announcing some unintelligible tidings.

I look at the book before him and find that my entries are faint and blurred, and that the words which I have jotted down are receding, and are so far away that I can scarcely distinguish them. I look back to my employer, and find that he has grown unreal and unsubstantial. Then, with an effort, I collect my thoughts, and speak, and find that my voice comes from a distance, and is strange to me.

“Ye mus’ be mistaken. Jus’ count yer money again. I got a hunderd an’ eighteen dollars fer de ring, an’ I put de money in de safe wit’ de odders.”

“It vuzen’ dere, but I’ll count it again.”

He empties the drawer containing the money, deposits the latter upon the glass case, and counts it. I follow every movement of his hands, and verify his count. Jack, too, draws near, and, from across the glass case, counts the bills and specie as Mr. Samuels touches them with his fingers. The sum before us is just one hundred and eighteen dollars less than the amount which the safe should have contained.

I stand there like a statue, unable to offer a word of explanation, feeling as uncomfortable as though I were really guilty of embezzling my employer’s funds, and withal so dazed that I wonder vaguely what it all means, and whether the scene in which I am participating is real or make-believe.

“One hunderd un’ eighteen dollars short,” announces Mr. Samuels, returning the money to the safe, and assuming a composure which he is far from feeling. “One hunderd — un’ eighteen dollars — short.”

Jack takes the redemption-book in his hand and scrutinizes the last page of entries, beginning at the top of the page and running his eyes down to the last item; and, as he reaches the final entry, he utters an exclamation of surprise, and emits a whistle which causes the old



gentleman to pause as he is about to close the safe, and to turn and gaze at the youth, and to query: "Vell, vot it is?"

"There's another entry in the book which has been erased by some one."

"Vot?"

He is back to the book in an instant, and he and I are poring over the page which lies open before us: and, as I observe but too clearly (now that my attention has been directed to it) that the occasional lines and dots very faintly discerned halfway down the page constitute the evidence of an entry cleverly and painstakingly erased, a light seems to enter my brain and to rend the darkness.

"You done et!" I cry, pointing an accusing finger at the Germ. "You rubbed et out to hide et."

"You lie, damn you!" he retorts. "You stole the money, and now you're trying to lie out of it."

"Et's a lie, Mr. Samuels," I declare earnestly. "I put de money in de safe, an' entered et in de book, an' he must 'a' rubbed et out after I left, an' made a haul."

"Mr. Samuels," says the Germ with feigned ingenuousness (and never before did his soul appear to me so small and germ-like as at this moment), "you can see for yourself who's lying. If I was the thief do you think I'd show you how the entry was rubbed out? Would I be showing you how I did it if I fixed the books and stole the money? Wouldn't I want to hide the whole thing? Well, I guess I would!"

His grey eyes grow so small with cunning, and his sallow face grows so yellow with fear of detection that, for the moment, I wonder whether the Germ is afflicted with jaundice, or whether it is merely the dread of discovery which changes his hue. But, whether it be cunning or fear that dominates him at this moment, the strength and



subtlety of his reasoning cannot be gainsaid. I see the hands of Mr. Samuels clasping and unclasping and evincing, in every movement, the perturbed state of his mind; I see his eyes roving about the room as though he purposely avoids meeting the gaze of either of his employés, and, as I vainly seek his eyes, the feeling is borne in upon me that, after all, I am a jailbird, and that my past will haunt me forever like an accursed thing which will not die.

"I didn't touch et," I maintain doggedly. "He's a crook —"

"Damn et, you lie!"

"— A crook — a damn crook," I continue, ignoring his remark, though my face is so hot with anger that I can scarcely control myself; "he's robbin' ye, an' he ain' got the gumption te face de music, so he's framin' dis up on me. But et ain' me as did et —"

"This ain't the first thing you missed, Mr. Samuels. What became of the diamond brooch? I'd like to know. He has charge of the books. I can't take any money in here without his knowing it. I couldn't steal a cent without his finding out. That entry was rubbed out while he had the books in charge. And he did it! He did it!" repeats Jack shrilly, pointing his finger at me. "He's a thief, and he's robbing —"

I do not permit him to finish his sentence. My fist strikes his lips and sends his head back, distorting his face so that a smirk seems to be engraved upon it by the force of the blow. He loses his balance and turns halfway round; but just as he seems about to fall to the floor, he regains his equilibrium, and hits me in the eye with a force which makes me stagger. I grasp him by the nape of the neck and shake him; and, though he struggles to free himself, he cannot loosen my hold. Finally I stretch out my

foot and trip him, and, with a sudden shove, send him sprawling across the floor.

And now I become aware of the fact that Mr. Samuels is begging me to restrain myself, and that his hand is upon my arm, and that his lips are trembling with excitement. But I am determined to give vent to my hatred of the despicable scoundrel upon the floor; and not even the presence of my employer serves to cool my hot anger.

"Don' touch him, Sam," pleads the old gentleman, as he holds on to my arm. "Such a bizness for a *Jehudah* to vos in a scrap mit anodder *Jehudah*! Chust like a *goy*, un' voise. *Oi veh!* but I got *tzoras* (trouble) in my old days!"

His boys are fighting! The troubled look in his eyes pleads for peace as he holds back Jack who has risen to his feet and seems eager to get at me.

"Chack! Chack!" he pleads.

"Let me get at him!" shouts the Germ without, however, throwing off the restraining arm of the old man. "Let me get at him!" he repeats, but more in a spirit of bravado, it seems to me, than in the hope of resuming the encounter.

"Shut up! Shut up! You get to woik un' git cool. Chack, vot's de ma'r mit you? You got such a crazy vays mit you like you vos *meshuggah* (crazy)."

"I want to smash that crook!"

"Well, here I am," I announce in contemptuous accents, inviting his attack if he be disposed to renew hostilities. And, notwithstanding my sympathy for the old gentleman, I cannot refrain from adding: "I'd like te see ye try it."

"Sam!"

The voice of my employer stills my boastful tongue and closes my lips.

"I vant you boys to shut up, bot' of you, un' de foist

von vot speaks mus' he got out of dis store putty damn quick! I ain't can stand dis fightin' all de time. Noddings but fight, fight, fight von morning to night. Vot I should do mit you?"

He strokes his grey beard, and his eyes wander from Jack to me, and then back again to Jack, and his look is troubled, and his voice unsteady.

"It's a bad bizness v'en you got two scrappers in your store un' dey gif each odder a hit in de neck v'enever dey git a chanst. A fine bizness, *oi veh!* No vonder I losen money all de time. Un' den t'iefs, too — safe boiglars. Fightin' vuzen' vorse anough — dey got to steal, too."

He gazes at me sorrowfully, and shakes his head; and, at the words and the look, my pride rises up in rebellion, and I feel my heart growing hard and cold.

"D'ye mean te say dat I hooked de money?" I inquire coldly.

He passes his hand over his forehead, and stares at me with such a helpless and troubled look in his eyes that I feel a certain sense of satisfaction in witnessing his discomposure.

"I don' know," he mutters feebly.

"Don' know? D'ye mean te say dat ye b'lieve I'm a crook?"

He does not answer. Instead, he goes behind the counter, and shakes both hands feebly at us, and clears his throat, and cries irascibly:

"Fo' v'y you boys stan' dere mitout doin' noddings? Git to voik —!"

"I wan' te know if ye b'lieve I'm a crook," I repeat icily, for my pride is in hot rebellion within me, and the coldness of my manner serves but to conceal the fire which indignation and resentment have kindled within my breast.

He does not answer. Instead, he opens the glass case



upon the counter, and fumbles among the articles therein, as though absorbed in his occupation. But instead of disarming me, his efforts to evade a reply to my query make me more determined than ever to force an answer from him.

"I asked ye a question, Mr. Samuels, an' I'd like te have an answer."

"Shut up!"

"No, I won' shut up. I wan' te know —"

He cuts me short with a wave of his hands, and glowers upon me.

"A answer ye vant? I gif you a answer. A little vile ago a di'mon' brooch wuz gone. Who stole it? I dunno; mybe I do, mybe I don't. Von of you two done it. Who it wuz? mybe I know, mybe I not. Now a ring is redeemed. Who got de money? You did. Who made de entry? You did. Who kep' de books? You did. The p'lice vuz told me to look out fer you. I didn' done it. I didn' believe 'em. I trusted ye. You wuz a *Jehudah*, a' orphan: I wanted to help ye. Now you pay me back. I lose money efery day, un' you rob me to boot. Vot I done to you dat you treat me like dat? Foist you steal de di'mon' brooch, den you rob me of a hunderd un' eighteen dollars. V'y you done it? Git out! Git out, you t'ief! I don' van' you no more here. Git out von my shop v'ere you robbed me!"

The words pour from his lips in a hot torrent. All his indignation, and disappointment, and resentment find vent in this outburst, and I listen dumbfounded to his denunciation. At first I scarcely realize that I am discharged. It seems so incredible to me that the man whose confidence and esteem I had striven so earnestly to win should believe me guilty of robbing him that several moments elapse before I can fully grasp the import of his words of dismissal.



Something in my look appears to touch him, for he strokes his beard with nervous gestures, and adjusts his skull cap which has slipped over to the side of his head until it rests upon his ear, and draws some money from his pocket, and says confusedly:

“Here’s a veek’s vaches. Take et.”

I clear my throat (which has grown somewhat dry) and find voice at last to say gruffly: “I don’ want et.”

I take down my overcoat from the nail whereon it hangs, and put on my hat.

“You take your veek’s vaches un’ don’ you hang me no mout’ on,” he persists peevishly. “I don’ care uf dis is de beginning of de veek *oder* de end of it. You started in de veek dis mornin’ un’ I can discharge you any minute I van’ to, on’y I vuz got to gif you a veek’s notice first. Did I vuz gif you a veek’s notice? I vuz not. Here’s your money.”

He is so indignant at my refusal to take the money, and so insistent upon offering it to me, that his insistence would amuse me if I were in the mood to be amused. But I am not in that mood. There is a sense of injustice rankling in my breast, and a stubborn pride which will not permit me to accept any gift from the man whose good opinion I had prized so highly, and who now charges me with ingratitude and theft.

“I won’ take a cent — not a cent,” I say doggedly.

Mr. Samuels raises both hands in horror.

“You gotta take it!” he shouts. “It’s de law. You gotta take it! You t’ink you vuz *Moishe Rabena* (Moses the Teacher) dat you know de law better dan odder peoples. You’re *oser* (by no means) so smart like you done vuz t’ink you vuz. You gotta take it!”

“Not a cent,” I firmly reiterate, buttoning my overcoat.

“Don’ git fresh to me. I don’ let no kid like you git

fresh to me. Uf you say anodder void I make you take two veeks' vaches instead of von." And, putting his hand in his pocket, he draws forth some additional bills and begins to count them.

I put on my hat and start for the door.

"Here, you!" he cries; and then, with a catch in his voice, he says gently: "Von't you shake han's, Sam, before you go?"

I cast a glance at his bearded face, and see that his eyes are moist, and that the hand which he stretches across the counter is trembling; but I steel my heart against the man whose loss of faith in my integrity has wounded me so deeply.

"No!" I answer gruffly, and, with the words, I open the door, and hurry out into the street.

## CHAPTER XVII

WHEREIN I AGAIN ENCOUNTER THE MAN IN BROWN AND  
FIND MYSELF IN HIS CUSTODY

My brain feels numb. My vision seems obscured. A veil seems to lie over everything. I cannot think: I can only feel — and that dully, with the feeling of unreality ever upon me.

I walk along the street to my lodgings; and my subconscious self leads me to them. I am surprised when I find myself at my destination, and vaguely wonder how I got there. I ascend the stairs, enter my room, and fling myself upon my bed.

I do not sleep. I am not tired. Only my brain feels tired, but my body feels rested after the night's sleep. I stare up at the white ceiling and endeavour to collect my thoughts.

I realize hazily that I have been discharged, and must seek other employment. I revolve in my mind the accusations which have been made against me, and, as I picture the old man charging me with robbing him and calling me thief, I leap up from the bed, and grit my teeth, and mutter "Damn him!" And even as I curse him, my heart absolves him from intentional injustice towards me, and I realize that I am more affected by the loss of his friendship than by the loss of my employment. For I have felt towards him as I would towards a father — and now the tie is sundered, and I am adrift once again. My lips have cursed him, but my heart has remained silent.

I open a closet door with a key which I take from my

pocket, reach up to a shelf, and take down a little box which I had secreted beneath an old coat. It contains my savings.

I had purposed to open an account in a savings bank as soon as I should have saved one hundred dollars. I was fast approaching the realization of my hopes in this respect; but now —

I empty the box, count the bills, roll them up, and put them into my pocket. I may need the money before many days.

I am about to go downstairs to notify my landlady of my intention to vacate the room, but pause to ask myself whether it would not be best to remain here at present. It would be time enough to change my room if I should find employment in a different section of the city. So I decide to remain here.

I do not replace the money in the closet. Even though I have decided to retain my lodgings I know that I shall feel more secure with the roll of bills in my pocket than if it was hidden away in a closet while I tramp the streets in search of work.

So, forth I fare, with head a little clearer, unwilling to let the morning pass without some effort to secure employment. But scarcely have I walked a block when the mental fatigue resulting from the stress of my emotions makes itself so manifest that I decide to wait a little while before seeking other employment — just a day or two until I recover my mental equipoise.

I feel in the mood for loafing. The sun is shining, the city is humming and singing, the air is clear and crisp, and everything about me invites me to do nothing for a day or two.

I think it is largely the sense of discouragement that is responsible for this mood. Something within me mur-



murs "What's the use?" and I accept the admission of defeat and, for the nonce, make no effort to combat the feeling of discouragement which enervates me.

It is succeeded by a sense of exhilaration. I feel free as I inhale the clear air and admire the streets gleaming in the sunlight: I feel as though all irksome ties have been sundered. The Song of Labor is rising from the streets, joyous, triumphant, glorious. The air is filled with music; the sky is blue overhead; the sun is transforming the flagstones into gleaming metals; the very garbage cans are crowned with gold. How good it feels to loaf!

No work, no cares, no responsibilities:—Oh, the joy of loafing on a day like this!

I cross to the Bowery, and walk down that street. Overhead the elevated trains shake the trestles as they roar their approach into the windows along the route. Down in the street the saloons are numerous, and the pawnshops flaunt the trio of gilded balls above their doors, and the dime museums exhibit paintings illustrating the wonders within.

I enter Park Row and, as I reach Mulberry Street, am tempted by curiosity to turn into that thoroughfare and visit the scene of my servitude in the days when the cruel city wrung tears of blood from a boy's heart.

The old brick barracks still huddle together as of yore, the alleys which slink round the rotting tenements still run from nowhere into nowhere, the brown-visaged foreigners still cling to the red or yellow bandanas, and brighten with color the streets which the pushcarts throng: and here is Mulberry Bend with its rookeries, and its criminals, and its vice.

I halt before the narrow alley through which Dandy Dan and I squeezed our way on that misty morning when New York first took me to its stony heart; and, as I stand

there, and the tragedy of my boyhood unfolds itself, the glory and the beauty of the sunlight seem to vanish, and I feel the chill and the wintry breath of the cruel City enter my heart.

So cold, so cruel, so pitiless! Capable of such warmth, welcoming with winning smiles and with alluring laughter: and in the end no mercy, no compassion, only the cold eye of the Mother who scorns the children she has suckled at her breast. Heart of fire transformed into heart of stone. Lips so warm whereon the kisses turn to ice. Soft arms of welcome which grow rigid and then strike. Happy, most miserable of Mothers, doomed to destroy the children she once loved.

Here dwell the Forgotten Children of New York — here dwell the Children of the Abyss — in these dark rookeries, amid these winding alleys, in these pestholes of the East Side.

I wonder whether the huge rookery wherein the monkey lived its brief, tragic life, still raises itself, in the rear of the alley, like a huge beetle crawling out of the earth; but I cannot summon courage to enter the narrow space before me and view the hell wherein I once dwelt. The cold has crept around me, and I am sick at heart.

I saunter over to Broadway, and down toward the Battery. My elevation of spirits is gone. I feel myself a wanderer, a homeless youth adrift once more, a young man without an object in life, one whom the city mocks, for whom the sunlight has no warmth.

Aimlessly I walk along; aimlessly I tread the pavements, and thread my way amid the crowds; aimlessly I cross the streets through which the horses canter and the wagons rattle; aimlessly I stroll onward, bumping into some of the hurrying throng, and being bumped into

by others; but I do not alter my gait, nor do I halt, until I feel a heavy hand upon my shoulder, and glance up to find the Man in Brown standing at my side.

"Hello, Smith-Gordin!"

"Hello!" I murmur faintly.

"You don't look particularly glad to see me. What's up?"

"Nothin'."

"Oh, yes, there is," he insists confidently, tightening his hold upon my shoulder and drawing me out of the throng to the entrance of an office building. "Yes, there is," he repeats, releasing his hold as we stand in the doorway. "What's up?"

"Nothin' 's up;" and then I add irritably: "W'y don' ye let a feller go about his business? You ain' got no right to hold a feller up in the street."

"Haven't I? I guess I have," he says with a confident smile. "I guess you crooks 'll find out after a while that you can't go below the Dead Line without getting into trouble."

"The Dead Line?" I murmur in bewilderment. "W'y, this ain't —"

"This is Liberty Street; and I want you to understand that we won't have the likes of you coming into this district whenever you feel like it. You're either going to stay out of here, or I'm going to run you in and teach you a lesson. Now which do ye want?"

His manner is so insolent and domineering that I feel my resentment rise in protest; but even as I am about to retort in anger, I feel my helplessness and my utter insignificance in the eyes of the law when pitted against this bully whose insults I must swallow. So, instead of replying with heat, I lower my eyes and mutter doggedly: "I didn' do nothin'!"



"What are you going to do? Are you going to stay out of this district, or not?"

"Yes," I growl. But he is still not satisfied, for he gazes at me with those keen grey eyes of his; and, when I look up at him, I find him studying me as though I were some abhorred creature marked for destruction.

"What are you doing down this way?"

"Nothin'."

"Are you working?"

"N — no."

"When did you lose your job?"

"This mornin'."

"Where were you working last?"

I thought he knew. I am relieved to find that he does not.

"In a store uptown."

"Samuels the pawnbroker?"

So he did know, after all!

"Yes."

"Why didn't you say so right away?"

"I t'ought ye knew."

He eyes me sceptically, and pulls his heavy brown moustache. There is one question which he has not yet put to me, and which I dread most of all; but just as I am beginning to feel that he will permit me to go without further examination, he puts his left hand upon my shoulder, raises my chin with his right hand so that I am forced to gaze into his eyes, and says sternly:

"Why were you bounced to-day from your job, Mister Gor-din-Smith?"

He combines the two names with such relish, and his accents, whenever he pronounces them, are so weighted with sarcasm, that he appears to delight in provoking me; but I feel so helpless in the presence of this big,



broad-shouldered hunter of my kind, this nemesis of the unfortunate associates of criminals and of every man who struggles for a foothold in the depths, that I grow more resentful and more secretive with every insolent question that he puts to me, and more determined to withhold from him whatever information I can conceal.

"I wasn't bounced," I growl in answer to his query.

"Oh, you wasn't bounced," he repeats sarcastically.

"No, I wasn't bounced. I t'rowed up me job 'cause I didn't like it."

"Did you? That's too bad — a nice, decent job like that. If I was you, I tell you what I'd do, young feller." And here he removes his hand from my shoulder, and bends down until his face almost touches my own. "I'd go back to my boss and ask him whether he'd take me back."

The suggestion, emanating from the man who had so persistently barred my way to honest employment, staggers me for the moment.

"I don' wan' te go back," I mutter.

"Oh, don't be afraid to ask. He can't do any more than say No. Don't be afraid to ask," he repeats, grasping my shoulder in so friendly a manner that I immediately grow suspicious of his motives. "If you haven't got the spunk to ask for a job, why, I'll help you out, young feller. I'll go with you. Come along!"

I draw back, startled, protesting, afraid of encountering my former employer in the presence of this man who seems bent upon my destruction. But my protests are unheeded, and the grip upon my shoulder only tightens as I mumble that I don't want to go back, I don't want that job, I wouldn't take it if it was offered to me, and more to the same effect. Finally, the Man in Brown abandons his attitude of feigned solicitude, and says

menacingly: "D' you think I'll take my orders from you, you damn dog, you!" And, with the words, he grasps my arm so tightly that I cry out with pain. "You'll either go with me quietly, or I'll take you to headquarters and have you locked up in the cooler till you learn a lesson."

So back I go to Hester Street with an officer at my side. I, who have fought so hard to live a decent life, am once again in the custody of the law, and forced to endure the humiliation of returning to the man who has cast me forth, with a detective as my companion.

I feel humiliated, it is true; but, at this moment, it is not humiliation alone which makes me so reluctant to visit the shop wherein I was once employed — it is fear.

I am afraid — afraid of the inevitable accusation and its consequences, afraid of imprisonment, afraid of the police, afraid of the law, afraid of the future — the future of which I was so hopeful, which stretches before me in shadows as dark and menacing as were the shadows which haunted the gaunt years of my youth.

We reach the shop of Mr. Samuels, and approach the door. Somehow, the objects in the window have grown strangely unfamiliar since this morning. The swords and revolvers, and the battered telescope, and the playing-cards are there in their places. So, too, are the silver candlestick and the gold-chased winecup whose glory has been dimmed. The ivory maiden still carries her tiny basket of ivory fruit; and on the shelf lie the Bibles and the Hebrew prayer book. But all these objects appear to belong to some previous state of existence: they are associated with a past which has grown dim.

We enter the shop, my captor a step in advance, his broad shoulders almost concealing me — I following, shamefaced and perturbed. Mr. Samuels and Jack stare

at me in surprise, and my embarrassment increases as I encounter their eyes.

"Mr. Samuels?" queries the Man in Brown as he approaches the counter behind which the old gentleman stands.

"Dat vuz my name."

"Do ye know this feller?"

Mr. Samuels nods.

"What did he do when you sacked him?"

"Vot you mean?"

"What did he do when you bounced him?"

Mr. Samuels stares at his interlocutor a moment, then queries: "Who you voz, anyhow?"

"Who, I? Oh, I'm from headquarters. I'm a detective."

"Vell, I got no complaint to make against dat boy. He's all right."

For once the assurance of the Man in Brown is shaken. He turns to stare at me dubiously, then gazes at Mr. Samuels and snaps: "Well, if you haven't got any cause of complaint against this crook I don't suppose I have," and turns toward the door as though about to go.

But the Germ is after him — the Germ, who has been listening eagerly to this dialogue and who does not approve of efforts to thwart justice — the Germ it is who now floats forward as though to seek an abiding place in the vicinity of the detective's ear, and who carelessly remarks: "He didn't say he hasn't got any cause for complaint. He only said he hasn't got any complaint to make."

"Oh, is that it?" The Man in Brown turns back with renewed interest, and proceeds to interest himself in the confidential disclosures of the Germ which has now settled down upon his ear and is preparing to infect that organ.



"You see," pursues Jack with engaging ingenuousness, "Mr. Samuels ain't the kind of man that likes to make complaints. No matter how much people steal from him, he don't like to feel that he sent them to prison. Ain't that so, Mr. Samuels?"

But if the Germ expects his master to corroborate his delicate tribute to the warm qualities of the pawnbroker, he finds himself mistaken, for Mr. Samuels seems goaded into fury at the compliments of his employé — so much so that his face grows red with rage, and his eyes blaze as he shouts: "Chack! Chack! You *mamser*! Uf you say anodder vord I break your neck!"

"Here you!" says the Man in Brown gruffly to the excited old gentleman; "he's going to talk just as much as I want him to talk, and you're going to shut your gab or you'll get into trouble."

"Shut my gab?" queries the pawnbroker indignantly. "Shut my gab, you *rosche* (wicked one)? Such a mout' you hang me on in my shop?" He bends across the counter, and shakes his fist at the detective. "You t'ink you're de boss here? You ain' de boss. Chust pay my rent for me uf you van's to be de boss. You got noddings to do mit me. I could lose such a much von money like I vant. It don' make you no matter uf I lose a di'mon' ring or a bone button. Vat I lose dat am my bizness."

"I'll show you that it ain't your business," says the Man in Brown gruffly. "Catching crooks is my business, I want you to understand, and I'm not agoin' to let you or any other man interfere with me when I'm on the job. So put that in your pipe and smoke it!" And, as he concludes, he brings the palm of his hand down upon the glass case with a force which threatens to shatter that fixture.

"Smoke et? Smoke et?" repeats Mr. Samuels in bewilderment. "Vat kind of a *schmoos* (nonsense) is dot?"



Put it in my pipe? Who vos done tole you dat I got a pipe, you smart Alix, you! Dot poor boy ain't vos done noddings dat you should arrest him. He's a goot boy — he's a goot boy, is Sam, un' a smart boy, too."

He eyes me so pityingly as he shields me, and his face grows so soft as he concludes, that I know there is no rancor in his gentle heart for the boy whom he believes guilty of ingratitude and theft. So big and noble a heart is it that even a thief may hide therein and find his sanctuary guarded by God's angels. Here at least, in the presence of the man who alone could charge me with crime, I feel that I am safe.

"Is that the reason you bounced him this morning, because he was so good?" sneers the detective.

"Bounce him? Who bounced him? V'y, I offered him two veeks vaches ahead un' he wouldnen' stay."

"How big a haul did he make?" queries the Man in Brown, turning away disdainfully from the pawnbroker, and addressing the youth named Jack.

"A hundred an' eighteen dollars," promptly answers that ingenuous youth.

"Shut up, you *mamser!*" shouts Mr. Samuels wrathfully.

But the Man in Brown has suddenly become interested in my trousers pockets. A light touch of his hand upon the left side of my trousers, as though in search of something bulky therein, and another touch upon the right side, and the next moment his big hand is in my right pocket, and he draws forth the roll of bills which constitute my savings, and triumphantly exhibits them to view.

"W-e-ll?" he says, rolling the word until it becomes an interrogation as clearly expressed as though he had chuckled: "What do you think of it now?"

"W-e-ll?" he repeats, with so broad a smile that the

heavy brown moustache quite gobbles up his lips, and his grey eyes shine like marbles, and his soft fat chin widens perceptibly.

Into the eyes of the Germ darts a malicious gleam, and the hairs of his little sandy moustache seem to grow quite jubilant as his lips expand into a smile, carrying the moustache along the joyous path; but upon the face of Mr. Samuels there is neither joy nor triumph — only the sadness of one who had hoped against hope and had seen the hope shattered. For miracles do not happen in the sight of men, but only in their hearts; and he had dared to hope for miracles in a Hester Street pawnshop, and in the light of day, with a detective keeping watch!

“I guess it’s all here!” says the Man in Brown, beginning to count the bills.

“It’s me savings,” I mutter hopelessly, knowing that none will believe me.

“Ninety-two dollars,” announces the detective, rolling up the bills. “Where’s the rest?”

“It’s the money I saved,” I mutter sullenly. “It’s mine.”

“What did ye do with the rest of the haul?” says my captor, ignoring my assertions.

“It’s mine!” I cry angrily, stretching forth my hand. “Gimme me money!”

For answer, the Man in Brown deposits the roll of bills in his own pocket, and shakes me roughly by the shoulder.

“Where’d ye put the rest of the swag?” he says gruffly.

“I want me money!” I cry, struggling to free myself. “It’s mine! I woiked for et! I saved et! It ain’ yourn: it’s mine!”

He grasps me with both big, strong hands by the throat; and shakes me until the blood rushes to my head, and I gasp for breath.

"Come along!" he says to Mr. Samuels. "Make a charge against him!"

"I ain' got no charge to make against him," answers the old man. "I got my bizness to atten' to, un' I don' vuz got de time to no law bizness."

"It's your duty as a citizen —"

"I know it: I know it —" and the old gentleman strokes his grey beard nervously — "but mybe de goot Gawd 'll fo'give me uf I don' vuz been too hard on de fahderless. He's on'y a poor orphan —"

"Well, is that any excuse for a crook that —?"

"— Un' he ain' got no von to look afteh him but his Fahder in heaven."

"Well, let Him look after him, then. It ain't any of your concern."

The dark, mournful eyes grow moist, and the face grows sad with that look of suffering and submission which the Tragedy of Israel imprints upon the countenance of the Jew.

"We gotta stan' togeddeh, we Chews," murmurs my former employer, with a catch in his voice. "All de woild is against us, un' hates us, un' persecutes us: — we gotta stan' togeddeh un' raise each oddeh up, un' not t'row each oddeh down. V'y I should send dat poor boy to chail? Vot he done? *Gonophed* (stole) a few dollars? Vell, Gawd 'll make it all right *mit* me again. He won' let me starve on dat account. Un' uf he vuzen' no Chew, un' vuz von uf dem *Roshoim* (wicked ones) vot persecutes my people, you t'ink I send him to chail anyhow uf he vuz a orphan? No, no, no! I don' send boys to chail for stealin' my money. T'ank Gawd I got some money to steal! Uf I vuz a beggar no von could rob me. Now I got a few dollahs I should become a chudge un' send dat boy to chail? I ain' no Gawd. V'y, I can't even read his heart: how I kin chudge him?"



"Sa-a-y!" drawls the Man in Brown disgustedly; "where the hell do ye think you are — in Sunday school? You come with me and make a charge against this dip pretty damn quick or I'll see to it that the cops 'll make it so hot for you that we'll run you out of New York before you're a year older — understand? Now come along!"

"Come along? To hell *mit* you! I don' come along v'en I don' vant to. You run me out of New York, vot? Chust try it. Chust try it, you *roshe*, you! I got some frien's too. Uf you try any funny bizness *mit* me you betta look out or you git into trouble. You make it chust so hot like you van' to. I ain' afraid von you, you big bluff vot you are! Bluff!" he shouts, as though the explosive utterance of the word relieves his feelings. "Bluff! — Bluff!"

The Man in Brown grasps me by the shoulder, and pushes me toward the door.

"I'll get this crook jugged (imprisoned) anyway, without you," he snarls, "and you'll find out soon enough whether I'm bluffing or not. You'll find out soon enough." And, opening the door, he jerks me out upon the sidewalk.

"Come along!" he says gruffly. "We'll see the Chief and have you put where you belong."

And, with a quaking of the heart, I realize that I am about to confront the famous chief of the New York detectives, Inspector Byrnes.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### INTRODUCING INSPECTOR BYRNES OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Mulberry Street once again : — and now I am on my way to Police Headquarters in the custody of the Man in Brown.

We pass the hordes of ragged children covered with filth, and the unkempt mothers carrying their babes at the breast, and the hucksters shouting to attract the attention of the pedestrians, and the vicious loafers in front of the saloons, planning mischief.

We jostle the idlers who obstruct our path, and thread our way through the groups which congregate before the pushcarts, and leave the vicinity of the Bend with its strident noises, and find ourselves in a less crowded section of the street.

Police Headquarters are at number 300 Mulberry Street — a plain marble building once white, now a dirty grey. Four stories rise above a basement with iron railings along the sidewalk; and in the centre of the building the iron railings meet the marble steps which leap up to the main entrance of the structure on the first floor. At one side of the broad marble steps there is a break in the railing where a short flight of steps leads down from the sidewalk to the basement. Where the railings meet the flight of steps which lead from the street upward to the main entrance there are two gas-lamps, one to each side of the lower step; and in front of the building, close to the curb, there is a tall, thin lamppost to illumine the street at night.

We enter the building. I have a confused recollection of passing a number of men in police uniform who stare at me, and whom my companion addresses familiarly; I remember hearing him inquire whether the Chief is in, but do not remember whether the answer was in the affirmative or the negative. It must have been the former, for a few seconds later I find myself in an office whose walls are adorned with crayon drawings and photographs (mostly of men in uniform); and near a window sits a man at a desk, engaged in writing, and smoking a cigar.

He is a big, broad-shouldered man, probably six feet in height. His head is bent over his work; but I catch a glimpse of brown hair somewhat thin over the temples, and of a heavy, sweeping moustache which hides his mouth: and the next moment he raises his head, and I find myself staring into a pair of bluish hazel eyes whose gaze sends a chill of fear through me. He is a strong, muscular individual, with full chest, and somewhat heavy features, and inscrutable eyes which disclose nothing of what the brain conceives. He wears a loose, low collar, and a dark brown cravat with a gold scarfpin in its centre, and a dark blue coat buttoned over his vest. He puts his hand to his heavy brown moustache, draws his cigar from his lips, drops the ashes in a glass ashtray, and queries: "Well? What's up?"

What's up? I do not know what's up.

I only know that I am at police headquarters, and that my captor believes me guilty of a crime which I never committed, and that it is useless for me to protest my innocence, for no one will believe me, and no one will give me the benefit of a doubt.

What's up? Only this: that I am hunted by the police, and that it is impossible for me to successfully resist my

persecutors, for I am friendless and alone, and the mesh of the law envelops me.

"I brought this dip with me," says the Man in Brown—"pinched him below the Dead Line."

The bluish hazel eyes of the Inspector gaze at me so penetratingly that I lower my eyes, unable to meet that sharp look of scrutiny.

"A dip, eh? Don't remember seeing him before. Ever been mugged?"

No, I have never been mugged: I have never been photographed for the Rogues' Gallery. That humiliation, thank God! I have hitherto escaped. So I raise my eyes, and mutter feebly: "No."

"What's your name?"

"Sam Gordin."

"Alias—?" queries Inspector Byrnes, as his heavy moustache closes over the cigar which he puts to his lips.

"Me name's Gordin," I mutter.

"See here!" says the Inspector sharply, raising his hand, and shaking his finger at me warningly. "I don't want any nonsense, young fellow, or I'll jug you so quickly that you won't have time to wink. What names do you sail under?"

"I ain' got no other name," I protest; but scarcely are the words out of my mouth when the Man in Brown deals me a blow behind the ear which sends me staggering half-way across the room to the wall.

"Ain't got no other name, you damn liar?" shouts my assailant, clenching his fists. "Didn't you tell me your name was Smith? Didn't you?"

His manner is so threatening, and his voice so angry and indignant, that I cower against the wall and make no reply.



"Smith, eh?" says the Inspector, puffing at his cigar. "That's a good name. Don't find many of that name about town. Why didn't you make it Brown?"

There is a touch of raillery in his voice which subdues the fear in my heart. I begin to feel that perhaps, in the eyes of this man who is accustomed to deal with crime in all its phases, I am not such a black, hopeless criminal after all. Perhaps he regards me as a casual offender who is not yet steeped in crime, and who merits some show of clemency. Be that as it may, I feel less fear of the broad, muscular, brown-haired individual whose name fills the world of crime with dread, than of the cold, brutal Man in Brown who stands guard over me.

At that moment a policeman enters hurriedly, and accosts the Inspector.

"They've got 'im."

"Who?"

"Skinny Tim."

"Found out anything about Chick Hodson?"

"Not a thing. He says he hasn't seen Hodson for a year."

"Bring him in."

"Want us to wait outside?" queries the Man in Brown.

"Never mind. I'll get through in a couple of minutes."

My captor and I retire to the rear of the office as two men enter — one a swarthy, burly individual who appears to be a detective, and the other a thin, cadaverous man with pale, sunken cheeks, and bloodless lips, who coughs as he follows the officer into the room.

"Well, Tim," says the Inspector; "we've been hunting for you for the last week or two."

"Why, Chief, I've been living honest," quavers the man addressed, in a weak voice. "S' help me —!"



"Cut it out!" growls the Inspector, glaring at the man before him. "I didn't ask you how you were living."

"I just thought I'd explain—" falters the cadaverous individual; and I observe his hands trembling as he fumbles the brown soft hat which he holds before him.

"Explain nothing!" interrupts the Inspector gruffly. "What the hell do I want with your explanations? Sit down!"

He indicates a chair near the side wall, and the sickly looking man drops into it.

"Where've you been?" pursues Byrnes.

"I've been living in Eighth Street, and I give you my word that I haven't cracked a crib for a year. Honest, Chief. I've been trying to live straight, and have lived straight, and —"

"That's a pretty blue tie you've got on. Where'd you buy it?"

The question is so trivial, and so unexpected, that the man introduced as Skinny Tim is visibly flustered at the query.

"I bought that on Broadway near Tenth Street," he replies, with an uneasy look at his interlocutor.

"Pretty shade of blue. I think I'll buy one like it."

His manner is so unresponsive to the lanky individual's protestations of right living, and he seems so indifferent to Skinny Tim's recital, that it is evident he is wholly uninterested in everything pertaining to the subject. So disconcerting is his attitude to the man who is evidently curious to learn what is wanted of him that the lanky individual makes no further attempt to impress the Inspector with the exemplary character of his mode of living, but relapses into silence, and waits for the detective to explain the cause of the arrest.

But Inspector Byrnes does not appear to be disposed to

gratify the curiosity of the cadaverous individual. Instead of conversing, he takes hold of a pen, and begins writing upon a sheet of paper which he tears from a pad that lies upon his desk.

The seconds pass. I begin to appreciate the state of mind of the man who sits in the chair, fumbling his hat, and coughing occasionally. He is asking himself what this means. Why was he arrested? What does the Inspector desire of him? Why is he brought into the presence of this dreaded man, and why is he not questioned and then discharged?

What do the police want of him? Why doesn't the Inspector question him? Why is he forced to sit here, asking himself a hundred questions which remain unanswered, while the man who has summoned him puts some trivial, irrelevant question about a pretty tie, and then proceeds to write a letter and to ignore him entirely?

What is the meaning of it all?

I gaze at the Inspector, and perceive that he is intent upon the letter. His head is bent over the paper, revealing the brown hair which is beginning to grow thin at the temples, and the heavy, sweeping moustache which covers his lips. What is he writing? Is he really so deeply interested in the letter upon which he is engaged that he is oblivious of the presence of the man whom he has summoned, or is it his design to play upon the unstrung nerves of the lean individual, and to permit the fancy of his victim to roam at will through the realm of dread possibilities until fear of the unknown overcomes the power of resistance?

Finally the letter is finished. He places it in an envelope, seals it, and puts it aside. Then he tears another sheet of paper from his pad.

"By the way, Tim," he says nonchalantly, without re-

moving his eyes from the paper whereon he is about to write; "that was a nice job that was pulled off at Yonkers the other night: wasn't it?"

"What job?" The cadaverous individual's voice is husky and unsteady as he puts the question.

Inspector Byrnes does not reply immediately. He is so deeply interested in the second letter which he is writing that at first he does not appear to have heard the question. It is not until several seconds have elapsed that he evinces sufficient interest in the subject to drawl (without, however, interrupting his writing): "Oh, haven't you heard of it? I thought everybody has read of it." Here he pauses a moment while he dips his pen into an inkwell and takes a puff at his cigar. "There was a big bank robbery up that way the other night." He is again intent upon his letter.

"I don't know anything about it, Chief," falters Skinny Tim. "I've been on the square this long time, and haven't been mixed up in any crooked work for a year, s' help me —!"

"Of course," says the Inspector soothingly. "We all know that."

Again the scratching of the pen, the thick moustache bent over the paper until it almost touches the letter, the cigar sending forth a thread of blue smoke which spreads out as it rises about the Inspector's head: — and again, for several seconds, silence, while the detective finishes his letter.

Another sheet of paper is torn from the pad. The Inspector yawns as he dips his pen into the inkwell and poises it over the paper. Without glancing at the man before him he casually remarks: "They say Chick Hodson has been nosing about town lately." Then he begins scrawling his third letter.



The gentleman addressed as Skinny Tim fidgets in his chair.

"I don't know anything about Chick Hodson."

Again silence, broken only by the scratching of the pen; then —

"Of course not. Did I say you did?"

The imperturbable countenance of the Inspector, his calm attitude of indifference, his absorption in scrawling upon sheets of note paper, and the long periods of silence, appear to wear upon the nerves of the man with the sunken cheeks.

What does he want of me? he is asking himself. How much does he know? Why doesn't he speak out? What is he concealing? With what am I charged? Why does he bring me here? Why does he keep me in the dark? What information is he seeking to wring from me?

And still there is silence, broken only by the scratching of the pen.

The man with the cadaverous countenance coughs, and then wipes his countenance with his handkerchief, although the room is quite cool.

For fully five minutes not a word is spoken. Although the captor of Skinny Tim and the Man in Brown are standing within a few feet of each other, not a word of communication passes between the two detectives. It is evident that they are familiar with the methods employed by the master of stagecraft who sits unconcernedly at his desk, and realize that they are cast for the rôles of silent spectators in the drama staged by their inscrutable chief.

After a few minutes, during which the prisoner grows momentarily more uneasy, a detective enters, and deposits upon the desk a blue tie which appears to be the counterpart of the tie worn by Skinny Tim. Then, without a word of explanation, he steals silently out of the room.



What does it all mean? This drama enacted in silence, this pantomime performed before the uneasy figure in the chair, this entrance and exit of a blue-coated figure who performs the rôle assigned to him without uttering a word: what is the object of this theatric appeal to the eye?

Is it, after all, merely an appeal to the eye, or is this accumulation of dramatic effects designed to stir some profound depths which can thus be most readily reached? Gradually, as I note the altered countenance of the cadaverous individual, the look of fear, the parched lips which he constantly moistens with his tongue, I realize that the object which the Inspector has in mind is to unsettle and shake the criminal's inner being. I am wholly ignorant of the elements of psychology, and have probably never encountered that word in my limited reading, yet, though I should be at a loss to explain my conclusions, I nevertheless feel vaguely that the effect which the noted detective aims to produce is psychological.

"What do ye want of me?" Skinny Tim hoarsely queries after vainly waiting for the Inspector to break the silence. Byrnes looks up from the sheet of paper whereon he is writing, and frowns upon the emaciated figure in the chair.

"Shut up!" he cries irritably. "Don't you see that I'm busy?"

He is so busy that he immediately resumes his writing; so busy that he maintains a profound silence, which is only broken by the scratching of his pen as it glides over the paper; so busy that when his left hand inadvertently touches a small, nickel plated bell, and rings it, he is unconscious of the fact that the silvery sound has been heard in the anteroom: in fact, he is so busy that he is not even aware of the entrance of a well-dressed, middle-aged man

with a blonde moustache and ruddy cheeks, until he glances up and finds the stranger standing before his desk.

"How are you, sir?" he says pleasantly, laying down his pen. "Mr. Stofel, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are in the employ of Hurley Brothers, on Broadway?"

The cadaverous individual starts perceptibly at mention of the name.

"I am," quietly replies the blonde gentleman.

"Haberdashers, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you remember selling any tie recently to that man?" He indicates Skinny Tim with a jerk of his thumb. The man with the blonde moustache turns and stares a moment at the pale-faced individual who is fumbling his hat nervously.

"I remember selling a tie Monday night to a gentleman who looked like him. I think he's the man. They were the last customers we had that day—he and the gentleman who was with him. They came in just as we were about to close up for the night: that's how I happen to remember."

"Look at this tie," indicating the blue necktie upon the desk, "and see whether it comes from your shop."

The man with the blonde moustache turns over the article indicated, and examines a linen tag stitched to the back of the tie.

"Yes, sir," he says. "Here's our name, Hurley Brothers."

"Now take a look at that fellow's tie."

At the words from the Inspector, the detective standing beside Skinny Tim's chair grasps hold of that unhappy individual's tie, and deftly loosens it.

"Here you!" protests the sickly looking prisoner, raising his hands to his neck.

"Keep down your mits or I'll smash your mug," growls his captor, as he pushes back his indignant prisoner, and hands the tie to Mr. Stofel.

"That's from our store," says the latter. "Here's our name."

"Now, can you describe the man who was with this fellow when they bought the ties?" pursues the Inspector, gazing keenly at the man with the blonde moustache.

"Not very well," replies Mr. Stofel, hesitatingly, "except that he was shorter than this gentleman."

"Yes, shorter and stouter — much stouter, wasn't he?"

"Yes, he was quite corpulent."

"Was his hair light or dark?"

"I really don't remember."

"Did you notice any scar —?"

"I really didn't notice it. You see, we have so many customers coming in —"

"I understand. I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Stofel. If we want anything further from you we'll call upon you."

He nods pleasantly to the middle-aged gentleman; and the latter takes his departure, hurrying out of the room as though glad to escape. Then the Inspector resumes his writing.

Again the head with its brown hair bent over the paper, the thick moustache almost touching the broad chest, the dark cigar sending forth its thread of blue smoke: and again silence, broken only by the scratching of the pen.

The cadaverous individual is unnerved. His hands tremble as he fumbles his hat; he fidgets about in his chair and moistens his lips continually; his eyes are fixed upon



the quiet man at the desk as though fascinated. Finally he murmurs huskily:

"For God's sake, Chief, tell me what's the charge!"

Inspector Byrnes lays down his pen, withdraws the cigar from his mouth, and queries slowly and impressively: "Where's Chick Hodson?"

"I don't know," replies Tim querulously. "How should I know? That guy that's been here is lying. I did buy a tie in his shop, but that was over a week ago, and I was alone. I wasn't with Chick Hodson. He's mistaken me for some other guy. It must have been pretty near two weeks ago when I bought it. It was in the morning, about ten o'clock, and not at night. I haven't seen Chick Hodson for a year. He wasn't with me, and no other guy was with me. I was all alone, s'help me —!"

"All right," interrupts the Inspector pleasantly. "I didn't say I believe him, did I?" And he resumes his writing.

But even his ready acceptance of the voluble protestations of the prisoner fails to wholly satisfy the latter. Strange to relate, Skinny Tim apparently harbors doubts as to the sincerity of the Inspector's professed incertitude. So much so, that he emphasizes his declarations by reiterating them under his breath until he concludes them with an oath which is wholly irrelevant to the matter in issue.

"By the way," the Inspector remarks casually, pausing in his work, and glancing at the prisoner with those inscrutable eyes of bluish hazel hue; "how many ties did you buy that day?"

"One."

"Ever see this one?" pointing to the tie which Mr. Stofel had first examined.

"Never saw it before in all my life."



"That so? That's strange." And again he resumes his writing.

"What is strange about it?"

A moment of breathless silence, during which Skinny Tim leans forward in his chair, as intent upon the answer as though his life depended upon it; then the calm reply from the man behind the desk:—"Nothing."

The emaciated individual glares at the Inspector a moment; his lips part, and then close again, as though he is tempted to speak and yet fears to do so lest he inadvertently incriminate himself in the presence of this dreaded sphinx; the next moment he sinks back feebly in his chair as though conscious of his own helplessness.

Once again the Inspector is very busy — so busy that the silence of the room is only broken by the scratching of the pen as it glides over the paper; so busy that he appears unconscious of the fact that his left hand has lightly come in contact with the nickel-plated bell upon his desk: yes, he is so busy that he does not even glance up when the detective who had deposited the blue tie upon the desk fifteen minutes ago re-enters, as silently as before, and remains standing in front of his chief.

"Where did you find this tie?"

Inspector Byrnes' tones are as calm and even as though he were casually inquiring about the weather. There is no trace of excitement in his voice, scarcely even a trace of interest. He might have asked, in the same tone of voice: Where do you usually take your lunch? or Where do you live, Mr. Detective? or Is any rain predicted for to-day? But instead of concerning himself about these matters, chance leads him to casually inquire about a tie; and Where did you find this tie? appears at this moment to impress him as a question rivalling in importance some

such query as, for instance, Where did you find your collar button this morning?

"I found it in Skinny Tim's room, on Eighth Street."

I am confident that Inspector Byrnes has known all along what the answer would be; that he has summoned the various witnesses and arranged the order of their appearances with a keen eye to the psychological effect upon the prisoner; but, accustomed as I have become to the calm, imperturbable tones of the Inspector, I am wholly unprepared for the change in his voice and manner at the reply of the detective. For suddenly he flings off his mask of indifference, and leaps to his feet with frowning brow and eyes flashing with anger, and pounces upon the trembling individual in the chair, grasping the prisoner by the left shoulder with his sinewy hand until Skinny Tim squirms in pain: then, lowering his head until his forehead almost touches the white brow of his victim, he shouts in a voice of ill-suppressed anger:

"That's Chick Hodson's tie, damn you! He's been living in your room. We've got the goods on you. Where is he?" And here the Inspector shakes the prisoner, and tightens his hold upon the latter's shoulder, until Skinny Tim winces with pain. "Where is Chick Hodson?"

"For God's sake give me a chance!" gasps the emaciated individual. "I'll squeal, Chief. I know you've got the goods on me. But I didn't have any hand in that Yonkers job. I—"

"Where is Chick Hodson?" Again that query, in accents which will not brook evasion.

"He'll — he'll — be back in Eighth Street to-night. He went to Garden City this morning."

"Where in Garden City?"

"He didn't tell me; but he said he'd be back to-night."

He is trembling with fear ; but the grip upon his shoulder does not relax.

“ What do you know about the haul in Yonkers ? ”

“ I don't know anything about it, s'help me — ! ”

“ Lock him up ! ” commands the Inspector, relaxing his hold : and, at the words, the officer who had arrested the prisoner, takes the latter roughly by the arm, and pulls him to his feet.

“ Come along ! ” says the detective, leading him from the room.

No sooner have they gone, than Inspector Byrnes, turning to the man who had produced the blue tie, says sharply :

“ Watch the Eighth Street house. Take Doyle with you ; and pinch Hodson as soon as he shows his face.”

“ All right, Chief.”

Another moment, and the Man in Brown and I are once more alone with Inspector Byrnes.

## CHAPTER XIX

I AM PHOTOGRAPHED FOR THE ROGUES' GALLERY AND AM  
INTRODUCED TO THE LINE-UP

"Now, Gordin," says the Inspector, turning to me; "you can either tell me the truth, or lie, whichever you prefer. I've never seen you before, and you don't look like a crook who's black all the way through. If you make a clean breast of everything it won't take me long to find out how much of you is white and how much black. And the best thing a young fellow like you can do is to be on the level and not try to hide anything. What's your real name?"

"Sam Gordin."

I am reassured by his manner, and by a touch of kindness in his voice. I begin to realize that I am not confronted by a cold, merciless, automatic machine, but by a man who is disposed to be just, and who does not assume that every offender brought before him is beyond redemption. So I gain courage as I gaze into his bluish hazel eyes, and say to myself that I will be candid, and will answer all questions unreservedly, and will conceal nothing from this man.

"Under what aliases do you travel?"

"None."

"What!"

His voice suddenly grows sharp and suspicious, and the word is shot at me like a bullet.

"Me monica was Newark Kid w'en I was a 'Bo, but that's the on'y one I ever had," I murmur feebly.



"Didn't you tell me your name was Smith?" roars the Man in Brown, shaking his fist in my face.

"Yes, but —"

"Didn't you?"

His voice is so fierce, and his gesture so threatening, that I draw back in alarm, and gaze helplessly from him to the Inspector. But the latter catches up the query of the Man in Brown, and repeats it coldly as he frowns upon me. "Didn't you?"

"Yes." My voice is scarcely more than a whisper. Fear has again crept into my heart.

"What other alias have you?"

"That's all."

"The truth, young fellow!" says the Inspector sharply; "we want the truth."

"I *am* tellin' the truth," I remonstrate querulously. "Ye want me to answer yer questions, an' w'en I answer 'em ye don' b'lieve me."

"Don't get so fresh, you damn little cur, you!" cries the Man in Brown, grasping me by the nape of the neck, and shaking me. "Answer the Chief's questions or we'll send you up the river before you're a week older."

The threat of prison completes my bewilderment as I stand swaying in my captor's hand, with his fingers clutching the collar of my coat, and his knuckles pressing against the back of my neck. My eyes wander about the room and finally rest upon the carpet at my feet, as I stand silent before the officers of the law.

They do not believe me. Whatever I may say in explanation or defence will be rejected as untrue. I feel myself utterly helpless. What avails speech when I am condemned in advance?

"Answer!" commands the Man in Brown.

"Wot?"

"What other alias have you?" It is the Inspector who puts the query; and, as he speaks, he lights a fresh cigar, and leans back in his chair.

"I ain' got none," I mutter doggedly.

Inspector Byrnes turns from me with a gesture of impatience, and addresses the detective at my side.

"Who's his pal?"

"Red Bill."

"Has he been caught with the goods?"

"Yes, but the fellow in whose store he made a haul won't make any charge against him."

"Why?"

"I don't know. It's Samuels the pawnbroker, in Hester Street. I suppose the old Jew is as crooked as this guy and is afraid to get near the police. I guess he'd rather be robbed than be investigated."

Even he, the gentlest, the noblest of men! I choke down my indignation, not daring to utter a word.

"This dip," pursues the Man in Brown, "helped himself to a hundred and eighteen dollars that he found in the safe. I wanted the old man to make a complaint, but he won't do it."

Inspector Byrnes lays his cigar upon the desk, bends forward in his chair, and addresses me sharply.

"What were you doing below the Dead Line?"

"I fergot," I murmur uneasily.

"Forgot, eh? Didn't you know that that district is closed to the likes of you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then what do you mean by going there?"

"I wuz lookin' for a job an' I fergot —"

"Well, you won't forget next time." Then, in peremptory tones, to the Man in Brown: "Mug him!"

Mug him? — I to be photographed for the Rogues' Gal-

lery? I, who have striven to be decent and honest? — I?

For a moment my breath comes in short gasps. I to be mugged? It seems incredible — incredible.

I am robbed of speech by the sweep of my emotions. I can only stretch out my hand pleadingly. But the detective has me by the shoulder, and is pushing me forward; and a few moments later I find myself in a cell, and wonder how I got there.

What will they do to me?

“Mug him!” said the Inspector.

The words echo in my ears — not clearly and distinctly, but like the booming of a distant cannon. A stupor seems to creep over me. Then I rouse myself, and spring to my feet, and mutter fiercely: “Damn ’em! Damn ’em!”

After a time I grow calmer (though the cannon is still faintly booming in my ears) and stand behind the barred door of my cell, or throw myself upon the cot, with a feeling that nothing matters now — nothing. I am to be finally classified as a Bird of Prey, pictured as a vulture whose food is man, and am to be displayed to the public gaze with other evil fowl, for men to shun and abhor. Nothing matters any longer. Nothing.

Honesty, ambition, struggle — all useless, all wasted, all vain. Blindly stumbling along the crooked paths of life in search of light and air and freedom, I strike the road which seems to offer all of these, and lo, it leads me to — the Rogues’ Gallery.

Two dishes were set before me in my youth, for me to choose: one was Crime, and one was Honesty, and I chose Honesty rather than Crime. To-day am I the gainer or the loser? Had I chosen Crime, the Rogues’ Gallery would have sought to picture me, and label me, and brand me with its mark. I have chosen to live honestly, and my fate is



the same. From the shame of the Rogues' Gallery I am not to be preserved.

"Damn 'em!" I mutter fiercely again and again, as I clench my fists, and stare before me with unseeing eyes, and wonder in a dull, numb sort of way, how it is possible for such things to be.

Evening draws near, and food is brought me which I scarcely taste. When the hour grows late I throw myself upon my cot, but cannot sleep. I feel tired, exhausted, but sleep seems far off.

"Mug him!" echoes and re-echoes in my ears, ever booming like a distant cannon, again, and again, and again.

Towards midnight I drop into a doze; but it seems that I have scarcely fallen asleep when I am awake again. I toss restlessly upon my cot throughout the early hours of the morning, and finally fall asleep, to be awakened by the sounds of stirring without as the day rouses police headquarters into life and activity once again.

Breakfast is brought to me, and I eat. With day comes the booming of the cannon again; but the sound no longer stirs rebellion within me. I am resigned to the inevitable — cruel, unjust though it be.

Shortly before nine o'clock my cell door is unlocked, and a tall, corpulent man with clean-shaven face curtly tells me to "Come on and get mugged!"

Though I had been expecting the summons ever since I opened my eyes, the words send a shock through me, and, for a moment, I tremble. But the next moment I am following him; and soon I find myself in a chamber with stone walls, and grated windows, and a man standing beside a camera, and some other men (three or four, I think there are) standing near a wooden chair which is lighted up by the morning light struggling through the bars.



My companion points to the chair and tells me to sit down, and the other men range themselves about it — all but one, a tall man who stands apart from the others and directs them — and, as I raise my eyes to his face, I recognize the Inspector.

“Sit down!” he commands.

For an instant a sensation of vertigo seizes me, and I raise my right arm involuntarily in search of some support; but my action appears to be misinterpreted, for one of the men near the chair springs to my side with a sharp “Keep down your hands!” and pinions my arms to my side as he drags me forward, and flings me into the chair.

I gaze before me dazed, numb, cold, and watch the photographer train his camera upon me.

It has come at last! This is the end, I say to myself. Now I’m to be classified with the Birds of Prey. Now I’m to be labelled and my photograph is to be exhibited in the Museum of Crime. After enduring cold, and hunger, and privation, rather than fling myself into the vortex of Crime, I am to be branded as an enemy of society, and am to contribute my photograph to the Rogues’ Gallery of the metropolis.

Cold and hunger and privation — all in vain!

The nights upon the park benches, the days when I wandered footsore from door to door — all in vain!

Hopes, and dreams, and the effort to live an honest life, and win an honored name — all in vain!

So this is the outcome of my foolish dreams! — the walls of stone, and the grated windows, and the camera focussed upon me, and the detectives on guard while the Rogues’ Gallery waits to receive the photograph of one branded as a criminal though guiltless of crime. So this is the way in which the law protects its wards!

The injustice smoldering in my breast leaps into

scorching flame. An uncontrollable fury takes possession of me. I spring to my feet with an oath.

"I won't!" I shout at the top of my voice. "I won't let ye! I —!"

But there are hands at my throat which strangle my cry, and hands upon my arms, and hands upon my shoulders, and in another moment I am pinioned in the chair, and the detectives are holding me down so that I cannot move.

"Ready!" says Inspector Byrnes calmly, standing to one side, and directing the photographer as imperturbably as though he were witnessing an everyday occurrence.

The camera clicks. It is over.

"Take him to the Line-Up," says the Inspector, as the detectives release their hold upon me.

The Line-Up? What is that?

Whatever it is matters little to me now. I follow my guard as in a trance. I am no longer furious and raging. My spirit is broken. I am docile now, more docile than a lamb — docile as a human being when his world crumbles into dust about him, and only he and Injustice survive amid the universal ruin, and he lies helpless and vanquished beneath his persecutor's iron heel.

He and Injustice. We two — Injustice and I — sole survivors amid the wrack and ruin of the world which I had created within my breast.

That world was my life. Formed of hopes and dreams whereon I had built gleaming fairy palaces, all bright and iridescent in the sunlight of my heart: how could such a world of visions last eternally? It was doomed to fall into ruins: it has crumbled into dust as was foreordained. And, stalking through the débris and the ruins, like a giant whose huge bulk shuts out the light, comes the monstrous form of Injustice, and sets his gigantic heel of iron upon my breast.

Injustice all about me — everything wrong, everything distorted, everything misshapen. There is no Right and there is no Justice. The man is a fool who has faith in either. I am no longer a fool. I am beginning to see clearly now. A man should have but one aim in life: — to make a haul, honestly or dishonestly, and not to bother about the law. He should live for the present only, not vexing his brain with thoughts of the future, and should live for himself alone, nor think of others.

I shall no longer resist the whip of Fate. I have been driven along, with the blows descending upon me, and have ever resisted, striving to shield myself with one hand, and fighting with the other. Now the fight is over: the Rogues' Gallery claims its victim: I shall resist no longer: I am vanquished at last.

I follow my conductor into a room where there is a long desk, behind which two police officers in blue uniform are seated, the desk forming the front of an enclosure apparently reserved for the officers on duty. There are upright gas fixtures at each end of the desk, with a half dozen globes on each, and in the wall facing me are some windows through which the light streams. To the right of the enclosure is a telephone booth, and through its windows I can see a man standing, with a receiver to his ear.

But it is not the fixtures within the room to which my attention is first attracted, nor the policemen within the enclosure, nor the telephone booth with its occupant. My gaze, as I enter, is suddenly riveted upon a sight which so startles me that I involuntarily start back with a gasp. Masked men — a score of masked men — are scattered about the room, and their eyes are turned upon me as I enter.

Masked men — a score of masked men, — some in police uniform, but the majority in civilian attire — gathered



in the light of day within the walls of Police Headquarters! White masks, black masks (there are no other colors) and keen eyes peering forth at me. White masks, black masks, and each mask seeming to focus the gaze of sharp eyes upon me as I cross the threshold. White masks, black masks, and their cold, stolid features turned toward me with an expressionless immobility which petrifies me as I suddenly and unexpectedly find myself confronted by these malignant spectres, all gazing at me with looks which, in my nervous state, seem baleful and threatening.

What does it mean? What is this new terror which startles me? What new torture is reserved for me? Are my nerves not sufficiently unstrung? Have I not suffered enough of mental anguish?

I gaze around me wildly, and then, for the first time, observe that I am not the only prisoner who is submitting to this ordeal. A dozen men are ranged in line to my left; and, as I realize, with a feeling of intense relief, that I have not been singled out for inspection, but am one of a dozen other unfortunates who must endure this ordeal, my conductor thrusts me roughly against an unkempt giant with blue eyes, and I find myself part of the Line-Up.

The Line-Up! Now the meaning of this spectacle dawns upon me. These men in masks are detectives, and are studying the features of criminals so that they may familiarize themselves with the physiognomies of the Birds of Prey while their own features remain unfamiliar to those whom they may some day shadow. In his office sits Inspector Byrnes, shrewd, keen, alert, ever devising schemes to checkmate the foes of law, ever matching his active brains against those of the wily figures which flit through the darkness of the Underworld: and this not the least of his achievements, this Line-Up each morning at Police Headquarters, with the light shining full upon the features



of those dragged forth from the dark haunts which have sheltered them, while the eyes peering forth from the masked faces which confront them leisurely study their lineaments and mark them for destruction. Woe to the evil-doers who pursue their crooked paths in life after the Line-Up has brought them face to face with those whose sharp eyes have studied them, and measured them, and recorded their every feature!

A grey-haired man with ruddy face is standing in front of the desk, with a book in his hand to which he refers as he calls out the names of those to whom he directs attention; and beside him stands a young man with blonde hair and blonde moustache, and neither of these is masked.

"Jim Trainard, alias Soft Jim!" calls out the grey-haired man; and, at the summons, a dapper young man with ingenuous countenance steps forward, and smiles upon the masked figures whom he confronts.

"Thomas Riggs, alias John Wicksel, alias Lefty!" A dark-browed man with a scar upon his cheek glowers upon the detectives as he takes his stand beside the dapper young man.

"Philip Mells, alias Whitey Mills — Michael O'Neill, alias Irish Tom, alias Patrick Brady — Joseph Byrne — John Hanlon, alias Tom the Kid!"

As their names are called, four more men step out of the line and join the two who had preceded them.

The blonde young man in front of the desk glances at a sheet of paper in his hand, and then addresses the masked detectives.

"These six fellows," he begins, "constitute the gang that kidnapped the Amster boy last week. Detectives Hefferman, Wills, Tomkins, and Fallen rounded them up, and deserve credit for making a mighty clean job of it, too."

"Yes," says a voice at the door, as Inspector Byrnes strides into the room, and points his finger at the accused; and, at the sound of the detective's voice, the smile dies out of the face of the dapper young man who was the first to be summoned, and his jaunty air suddenly deserts him. "We've got them dead to rights, and they'll get the full limit of the law. That fellow — Raise your hand, Jim!"

The dapper young man raises his right hand a moment, and his face blanches as he meets the bluish-hazel eyes fixed upon him.

"— That fellow," resumes the Inspector, "is the leader of the gang. Take a good look at him, boys. Notice that the lobe of his right ear has been nicked where Black Louis chipped off a little bit with his knife in a scrap they had about six years ago. He likes to wear his hair low over his right temple because"—here the Inspector, with a movement of his hand, sweeps back the wavy brown hair over the young man's forehead—"there's a scar here which shows pretty plainly when the hair doesn't hide it. Also observe that his right eyelid is much heavier than his left. Don't forget that droop. He sometimes wears glasses to hide it when he's afraid of being shadowed.— And although I'm directing your attention especially to Soft Jim, he being the leader of the gang, I want you to closely examine every other member of it. They've all served time, and all are desperate characters. There's Mells, for instance, alias Whitey Mills. Raise your hand, Whitey! Notice how his arm shakes. He used to be handy with the pen when he was a boy — spent five years in Sing Sing for raising checks — then he got in with some yeggmen (safe breakers) and travelled with Hank Miller until his nerves began to give way. Now he's not fit for anything except snatching kids from their homes, and that's about as low a form of crime as any crook can descend to. If I had my

way I'd hang every kidnapper that I can lay my hands on."

His voice is so expressive of contempt as he speaks of "snatching kids from their homes," and his face is so stern as he concludes his denunciation of the prisoner, that the latter lowers his eyes and shrinks back: but Inspector Byrnes, paying no further attention to him, admonishes the detectives once again to scrutinize the kidnappers closely so that the features of the prisoners may be imprinted upon their minds, and then walks slowly out of the room.

The band of scoundrels is marched out of the room, and another prisoner is directed to stand forth, while a catalogue of his crimes is read by the blonde young man, after which the grey-haired officer cries: "Mug him!" and the prisoner is led out of the room, to be photographed for the Rogues' Gallery.

The next man in line is an habitual criminal whose photograph already adorns the art gallery of Police Headquarters. Then comes a middle-aged man charged with burglary; and after him a young man with a dazed look in his eyes, who is accused of embezzling funds of his employer; and then follows the unkempt giant with blue eyes who stands next to me, and who is charged with having stabbed a policeman and shot a young woman.

"Mug him!" says the grey-haired officer, as the prisoner charged with burglary is led away.

"Mug him!" he repeats, as the young man with the dazed look is taken out of the line.

"Mug him!" he commands, as the unkempt giant is disposed of.

All are gone — all but me. Alone I stand there, dazed, trembling, with everything whirling about me, and the chandeliers in the room bobbing up and down, and the masked detectives staring at me, and everything strange and unreal.



"Samuel Gordin, alias Samuel Smith," comes the voice of the blonde young man from a great distance, as he glances over the sheet of paper in his hand: then, after a pause, he queries: "Has he been slated?"

"No," a voice replies from amid the group of detectives — a voice which I recognize as that of the Man in Brown — "his boss refuses to make a complaint. Robbed Samuels the pawnbroker of a hundred and eighteen dollars, and is crooked all the way through. Keep your eyes on him, boys. He needs watching."

"Samuel Gordin, alias Samuel Smith," repeats the blonde young man, again referring to the sheet of paper which he holds in his hand; but his voice seems to come from so far away, and his face is so blurred, that I wonder whether I am awake or whether I am dreaming. "Pickpocket, embezzler, burglar, pal of Red Bill. Record not yet traced, but seems to be all-around crook and dangerous character."

"Has he been mugged?" queries a voice, and that voice, too, comes from so great a distance that it seems merely an echo.

"Yes. Mugged this morning."

"Then let him go. There's no charge against him as yet."



## CHAPTER XX

### WHEREIN I GIVE UP THE STRUGGLE

I am not led back to my cell. Some shadowy figure takes me by the arm and leads me away from the shadows with their dim masks, and the blonde shadow with the blur (can it be a sheet of paper?) in its shadowy hand, and I find myself after a few moments staring out into an unreal street along which a phantom horse is pulling a phantom wagon, while a ghostly little girl is laughing as she bounces a rubber ball upon a sidewalk which undulates in the mists.

“Don’t fall asleep. This ain’t no lodging house. Get a move on ye!” The harsh voice proceeds from the shadowy figure which has led me from the room.

I obey mechanically, and find myself upon the sidewalk, leaning against the iron railing before the building; while the street gradually emerges from the shadows, and the phantoms become real, and the world emerges from chaos, and the sunlight rests upon my face.

It rests upon my face, and it lies upon my hands, and it touches the clothes which cover my cold body; but it cannot enter my heart, where the darkness is most profound, and the cold is most intense: it cannot drive out the evil forces which are warring there amid the gloom, for there is Hell in my heart, and Evil and Despair are holding revelry amid the darkness.

*Pickpocket — embezzler — burglar — all-around crook — dangerous character!*

A voice from a great distance is shouting the words so that all the world may hear; but it comes to me faintly, from afar, as did the booming of the cannon in the night.

*Pickpocket — embezzler — burglar — all-around crook — dangerous character!*

Again and again the words echo in my ears, denunciatory, accusatory, definitive, as though a court of last resort were passing final judgment upon me.

It is all settled. When I was a child my mother taught me that on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, God inscribed in the Book of Life the names of those destined to live during the ensuing year, and the careers reserved for them. Now another Book of Life is opened before my eyes, and my startled gaze reads the record which Police Headquarters has inscribed.

It is all settled. I am branded: I am labelled: I am filed away with other human documents. I am accused: I am indicted: I am convicted: I am condemned — and all without the form of trial, with no opportunity to defend myself, with no voice raised in my behalf.

Samuel Gordin, alias Samuel Smith.— The Samuel Gordin, orphaned and guideless, who spent the years of his youth without ever knowing what youth was; the Samuel Gordin who passed his starved childhood days with vagabonds and criminals, and yet remained decent; the Samuel Gordin who suffered and endured privation rather than steal a penny, and who thought that he could attain an honorable position in the world by living honestly — the same Samuel Gordin, now alias Samuel Smith, pickpocket, embezzler, burglar, all-around crook and dangerous character!

*All-around crook!*

That is the crowning infamy: that embraces every form of moral turpitude: that designation implies ostracism from the society of every honest man.

*All-around crook!*

That means that there is no longer any hope for me. In the Rogues' Gallery I shall be duly labelled (in fact, am already labelled) as such. The detectives have scrutinized me, studied me, and have been directed to keep their eyes on me. I am, therefore, a marked man, branded as a menace to society and a dangerous criminal—a man to be watched, shadowed, and arrested upon the slightest pretext. Heretofore the enmity of one detective (the Man in Brown) has sufficed to bar every door of opportunity which I have striven to force open. With the entire detective force now arrayed against me, what hope have I of ever retaining a position or of earning an honest livelihood? None.

Yes, there is Hell within my heart, and Evil and Despair are holding revelry amid the darkness.

*All-around crook! All-around crook!* shout the imps deep down in the darkness.

*All-around crook!* sneeringly, tauntingly, come the voices.

*All-around crook!* as though it were a challenge to all the world of smug respectability.

*All-around crook!* goading me on to desperation, as the voices mount from the dark depths within my heart.

"Damn respectability!" says Evil. "Were you not honest? Were you not ambitious? Did you not work conscientiously? Did you not suffer and starve in order to live honestly? You did all these things, denying yourself a thousand pleasures which Evil reserves for its votaries, and now you have your reward—the Rogues' Gal-



lery, the Line-Up, and the brand of the All-Around Crook."

"You have tried to gain an honest livelihood," says Despair, "and have been driven from door to door. If you have failed in the past, with only one or two men (if we include the Man in Blue) arrayed against you, what hope can possibly remain to you now, when the whole Detective Department of New York is on your trail?"

"No hope," sobs Despair.

And all the morning, as I walk the streets, dazed, bewildered, overwhelmed, not caring whither I go or what becomes of me, Despair wails over and over again the same refrain: "No hope. No hope."

At noon I find myself upon the river front, staring stupidly at a boat which is passing beneath the Brooklyn Bridge, and vaguely wondering how I came hither.

Now, as I stare down the river at the huge bridge which hangs suspended above the greyish-green waters, and perceive the unprotected wooden boat passing beneath the huge mass of steel which spans the stream, my weighted brain sluggishly evolves an analogy between the monstrous network of steel cables, and steel girders, and steel bars, hanging suspended over the frail boat, and the powerful forces which the great city, in its blindness, marshals to crush the despairing souls of the Forgotten Children of New York.

The heavy steel bridge overhead, the river beneath, and between them a frail boat threatened by both. The heavy steel bridge, which symbolizes all the wrong and cruelty and injustice of the great city, joined and welded together and suspended above the Children of the Abyss embarked in the frail boat of Life upon a treacherous stream.

If the bridge fall the boat will be crushed like an 'egg-



shell. What hope for the Forgotten Children if the bridge fall? What hope if wrong and cruelty and injustice overwhelm them? Above them, the forces of Evil: beneath them, the stream of Oblivion: — what hope if the bridge fall, the heavy, overweighted, merciless bridge which has steel arms that crush, but no heart which feels! And again I feel the chill and the wintry breath of the cruel City enter my heart, as I felt it yesterday, while standing before the narrow alley on Mulberry Street.

New York — the gay New York — so cold, so cruel, so pitiless! Capable of such warmth, welcoming with winning smiles and with alluring laughter; and in the end no mercy, no compassion, only the cold eye of the Mother who scorns the children she has suckled at her breast. Heart of fire transformed into heart of stone. Lips so warm whereon the kisses turn to ice. Soft arms to welcome which grow rigid, and then strike. Happy, most miserable of Mothers, doomed to destroy the children she once loved.

*All-around crook! All-around crook!*

From afar comes the voice of the Man in Brown, warning the masked detectives that I require watching. "He robbed Samuels the pawnbroker of a hundred and eighteen dollars, and is crooked all the way through. Keep your eyes on him, boys."

I put my hands in my pocket, knowing that there is nothing there. The money which the Man in Brown has abstracted is probably at Police Headquarters; but I shall not go back to demand it. Not for all the money in the world would I re-enter that accursed place. Let them keep it! Let them keep all of it!

"Damn 'em!" I mutter, as I gaze across the street at a saloon which is hiding itself between an old, rickety,

three-story brick house on one side, and an old, rickety, four-story brick house on the other side. It is not a tidy looking place. There are three floors of masonry pressing down upon it; and what with the rickety houses to either side, and the weight of brick above its head, it seems to bulge out in front, and to be squeezed in all over the rest of its body.

It occurs to me that I had a dollar bill in one of the pockets which the Man in Brown had not examined. I insert my hand in my vest pocket and find the bill. Also a quarter of a dollar in silver.

*Keep your eyes on him! All-around crook! Keep your eyes on him, boys!*

Yes, keep your eyes on me, boys! To hell with respectability! Watch me enter this dirty, ill-smelling place, and stand before the wet bar beside half a dozen 'longshoremen who are drinking their beer.

No beer for me. Here, bartender!—you with the bloated red face and red, sticky hands—give me something to make a man forget, do you hear? Whisky—give me whisky—so that I may forget!

*All-around crook! All-around crook! Crooked all the way through! Keep your eyes on him, boys!*

More whisky! How much whisky does it require to drown the voices of imps within one's heart?

*All-around crook! All-around crook!*

Another glass! I can drink as much as any man. What is there to restrain me now? Nothing. Why should I not get drunk—I, who am crooked all the way through? Another glass! Keep your eyes on him, boys!—he can drink as much as any man.

What's that? I didn't pay for that last drink? — Well, what of it? Haven't I been drinking and paying for two hours? I can't pay you for this drink because I haven't any dime left. I've been spending my money here for two hours, and, because I have nothing left, you tell me —

— Don't you dare! Don't you dare touch me! I'm an all-around crook! I'm crooked all the way through. Keep your eyes —!

I pick myself up from the sidewalk to which I have been flung, and walk along unsteadily. I do not ask myself whither I am going or what is to become of me; but somewhere lurking in my mind there is a thought, vague and indefinite at first, which somehow guides my steps and leads me gradually toward a certain objective.

I first become fully conscious of the fact that I have an objective in mind when I find myself standing upon a corner and gazing at a street sign with the words "Water St." upon it. My objective seems to loom up closer to me as I dimly realize that there is something familiar in my surroundings. The houses remind me of some neighborhood in which I once resided, and the squalid street seems to shake itself as though offering an uncouth welcome to a prodigal son. And finally, walking unsteadily along the dirty sidewalk, past dives whose windows seem to leer upon passers-by as the light strikes them, past wretched forms which slink in and out of dark hallways, I halt a moment before a dingy house with a saloon upon the ground floor, and a stairway to the side leading up to the floors above — halt a moment, as a drunken man may pause, while recklessly playing dice with Fate, to dully wonder whether the next throw will bring life or death — then, with a muttered oath, I ascend the stairs unsteadily, open a bedroom door on the floor above, and stand upon

the threshold, surveying Red Bill, who is sprawling upon the bed.

He is lying there, attired in a dirty woollen shirt, and old, shiny trousers, and his coat and vest are on the floor near the bed. He has not removed his shoes, but rests them upon the stained bedsheet which covers the mattress. His red hair and beard are unkempt, and he presents a disreputable appearance as he starts up at sight of me; but, in the reckless mood which possesses me, I feel that, after vainly seeking to establish a false position in life, I am once again back to where I belong — back amid the scum and wreckage from which I foolishly sought to escape — back with one of my kind, outcast even as I.

*Samuel Gordin, alias Samuel Smith. Pickpocket, embezzler, burglar, pal of Red Bill.*

“I’ve come back,” I say defiantly, closing the door.

His eyes, which have lighted up with anger at sight of me, open wider, and grow eager and crafty.

“Come back? Wot de hell d’ye mean? I t’ought ye wuz a goody goody reformed guy.”

*All-around crook! All-around crook! Crooked all the way through!*

“Reformed?” A hard laugh breaks from me as I repeat the word. Then I raise my fist above my head, and grit my teeth, and shout: “Te hell with reform! I’m goin’ te be a crook!”



*How I walked in darkness, how I lived amid the dense gloom of the Underworld with outcasts and criminals, how I became acquainted with Chinatown and with the Coney Island of a quarter of a century ago, and the adventures which befell me, will be related in the second book of the trilogy. How I groped for light and found it, how I acquired an education and learned the meaning of love, how I fought the evil forces within my soul, and how I emerged from the Abyss and found the sunlight shining in my heart; all this will be related in the third book, thus completing the epic of the streets entitled "Children of the Abyss"—provided a patient public evince sufficient interest in my story to warrant the recital of my further adventures.*



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